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The Week

FRANCO-ITALIAN relations are in the center of the European limelight once again. Just as France and Spain were about to renew their endless discussion of the question of Tangier, Mussolini sent a division of the Italian fleet there, to help the large Italian community celebrate the fifth anniversary of Fascism. Not unnaturally, the European press has been reminded of Kaiser Wilhelm's famous visit to Tangier in 1905, when he conferred with the Sultan's representatives and upset the Anglo-Franco-Spanish apple-cart, and relations between France and Italy are therefore, for the moment, rather more strained than usual. France has announced the signing of the long-deferred treaty of amity with Italy's quarrelsome eastern neighbor, Jugoslavia. This only gives formal recognition to an existing condition, and does not mean, as Paris propaganda asserts, that the position of France in southeastern Europe is stronger. On the contrary, it grows weaker, as we get farther from the treaties of 1919. Rumania, for example, is no longer completely in the French orbit, but is on excellent terms with Italy. The latter country's ambition for a greater share in the administration of Tangier has the backing of Great Britain, a fact which makes the Mediterranean question all the more delicate. No problem confronting European diplomacy is more important than this one, and none more clearly reveals the unregenerate, "pre-war" mood in which the chief nations conduct their foreign policies.

THE situation in China has degenerated into a series of duels between military leaders. In the north, the Manchurian General, Chang Tso-lin, is defending Peking successfully against Yen Hsi-shan, the "model governor" of Shansi province, with whom is allied, for the moment, Feng Yu-hsiang. In the south, the two centers of the Nationalist movement, Hankow and Nanking, are fighting one another. Canton is nominally allied with Nanking, but is a faint-hearted friend. It sends little money to the hard-pressed Nanking regime; and there is talk of a new grouping in which Canton would throw in its lot with Chiang Kai-shek, the erstwhile Nanking leader, who is now biding his time in Tokio, using that city as Central American revolutionists use New Orleans. Throughout China, trade is disrupted. Missionaries who have tried to return to the interior have been forced to flee again to the seacoast. It is not impossible that years may elapse before there is any material change for the better in conditions.

PRINCE CAROL of Rumania has decided that he wants the throne which he renounced long ago, when he was under the spell of the titian-haired Mme. Lupescu. Now he has broken with the lady, at least temporarily, and wants to take the crown from the unlucky little six-year-old King Michael. Seemingly, he has a good chance of success. A large part of the army is with him, and the National Peasant party favors his candidacy. Reprehensible as it may be, we cannot work up much interest in the Rumanian revolution, despite the importance of its possible consequences. Years ago there was a say-

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ing at Monte Carlo, "Whether black or red comes up, white [Blanc—the name of the Casino's owner] always wins." Whether Carol or the Bratianos are on top in Rumania, the peasants, and the millions of Jews and other oppressed minorities, are fairly certain to find that their lot continues as hard as ever.

RUSSIA has decided to take part in the coming meeting of the League's Preparatory Commission on Disarmament, in which the United States and all the leading European nations will also be represented. The fact is not of much importance so far as limitation of armament is concerned: the experience of last spring showed that there is little hope of substantial reduction at the present time. It is of importance, however, as indicating Russia's desire to coöperate with the West at least to some extent: by staying out of the conference she could have strengthened the likelihood that it would fail. Her willingness to come in is, no doubt, partly because she doesn't want the powers she regards as unfriendly to meet without her; but it likewise confirms the impression, derived from other evidence, that for the present her outlook is toward the West, not the East, and that she is prepared to go a considerable distance to placate Europe.

BECAUSE Secretary Mellon has for the past few years underestimated the Treasury surplus, the Democrats assume that he is now doing so again, and consequently that a larger tax cut than he recommends can be made. But it would be just as logical to infer, merely on the basis of probable fluctuations in prosperity, that, because previous estimates have been too small, an estimate some time in the near future will turn out to be too large. Inspection of Secretary Mellon's figures just presented to Congress strengthens this impression. The estimate for the fiscal year 1926 was too low, because, in spite of the sweeping cut in rates and increase of exemptions, the yield of income taxes increased. This was due to the unwontedly large profits of 1925. The estimate for 1927 actually counted on a higher yield from income taxes than resulted. The large surplus of last June arose rather from the fact that the collection of back taxes was larger than expected, and settlement of war accounts with the railroads brought in more than was hoped for, while expenditures were less than the budget estimate. Nobody can deny that collection of back taxes, dating largely from the high rates and less experienced administration of the war period, is likely to shrink, or that settlements with the railroads will soon be completed. On the other hand, Mr. Mellon's estimate of yield from the corporation and personal income taxes is no smaller for the fiscal years 1928 and 1929 than for 1927. Yet everybody knows that profits have recently been shrinking in important industries, such as automobiles, steel and oil, while stocks, terminating their spectacular rise, have turned downward. Even if no surplus is desired, it would be well not to reduce taxes too much this year.

SOME of Mr. Mellon's arguments on the nature of the specific cuts to be made again reveal the social limitations of his tax philosophy, which lead him into economic and statistical fallacies. He wants the corporations' income tax reduced. Therefore he lumps their local and state tax-payments with their federal income-tax and makes the striking calculation that, in 1924, "24.58 percent of their net income was paid in taxes." Of course, property taxes, which make up the largest bulk of local and state taxation, are not paid out of net income. They are properly an expense. In a peculiar sense they constitute a payment for services rendered, services which the activities of the corporation demand—such as fire and police protection, water systems, highway building and maintenance, and so on. With just as much logic, Mr. Mellon might have lumped the corporations' expenses for materials and labor with their income taxes and stated that the total equals several hundred percent of their net income. And just as the Secretary fails to distinguish between property and income taxes, so he fails to distinguish between the tax on the *net* income of corporations—in reality a profits tax—and the tax on the income of individuals. Because the rate levied on corporate net income is higher than the rate levied on all but a comparatively few individual incomes, he says there is discrimination against dividend receivers. But, as far as the individual is concerned, the dividend yield is clear gain, sufficient to have induced him to invest his money in the corporation, regardless of the tax on its profits (unless he has calculated badly). Complaint against any "discrimination" involved must be highly metaphysical.

ALTHOUGH we are deeply moved by the effort to repeal the automobile-sales tax, the Secretary's argument in favor of the tax also fails to make necessary distinctions. The railroads, he says, are heavily taxed, and part of their taxes go to roads, which furnish a means of competition for busses, trucks and private automobiles. The latter should, therefore, be taxed also. One might begin by asking how many passengers and tons of freight do not get to and from railroad stations by means of roads. But the main point is that a sales or consumption tax, such as that on automobiles, cannot fairly be compared with such property, franchise and income taxes as railroads pay. Do not those who operate busses and trucks for profit have to pay property and income taxes, either as companies or as individuals, just as the railroads do? And do not individual automobile owners have to pay property taxes and license fees? There is no more

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reason for a sales tax on automobiles than for a sales tax on locomotives and railroad cars. Sales taxes are indeed productive of revenue and are fairly easy to collect, but socially they are inferior to income taxes, because they cannot be adjusted at progressive rates so that the tax burden will be principally borne by those who can best afford to bear it. As for the Secretary's opposition to the estate tax, we have dealt with this subject in a separate column.

THE outcome of the Fall-Sinclair trial is still in doubt, as this issue of the New Republic goes to press, with serious threats of a mistrial. But whatever happens, there can hardly be any division of opinion as to the character of the exhibition it has afforded in its first fortnight. We agree with the New York Times when it says that

> the spectacle of a former member of the Cabinet, when charged with conspiracy and corruption, hiding behind every legal technicality, and refusing, along with his son-in-law, to testify lest in the act he incriminate himself, is one to make us blush and hang our heads if we have not lost the power of moral reprobation together with national pride.
>
> Ex-Secretary Fall continues to protest his innocence. But why does he not thus demand that every record be brought to light, every secret transaction uncovered, every witness heard? . . . He has forever condemned himself in the eyes of his fellow countrymen. Their sense of disgrace is far deeper than anything political or personal. It goes to the very substance of our national dignity and repute.

We commend these words to the attention of those newspapers, including nearly the whole of the Republican press and some conservative Democratic journals, which consistently belittled the Walsh investigation from the beginning, and did all they could to create a public opinion which would either force it to halt, or negate its results. To a considerable degree they were successful at that time. Are they proud of their accomplishment?

APPARENTLY one of the most solid and spirited coal strikes of recent history is occurring in Colorado, under the leadership of the I. W. W. Thus again is read the old lesson that the attempt to substitute a company union for a legitimate labor organization does not necessarily pacify the workers, but may lead to trouble under more radical leadership than that of the American Federation of Labor. For it is well known that the chief coal producer in the district—the Rockefeller-owned Colorado Fuel and Iron Company—has long operated on an open-shop basis, with an employees' association of its own. The United Mine Workers of America, the A. F. of L. organization, may also learn from this strike the lesson that it is sometimes possible, with spirited leadership, to organize fields where the employers have placed in the way of the union every possible obstacle of legislation, court authority, police and competitive "welfare work." The most aggressive possible effort to organize the non-union fields must accompany the union's new and admirable policy of coöperation with employers in the union fields to reduce costs without infringing on labor standards. The attempt of the courts to forbid such organization, through injunctions based on the anti-trust laws, calls for a most vigorous challenge on the field of action. It would be disastrous for all concerned if the responsible and intelligent unions, succumbing to judicial suppression, should make way for irreconcilable and destructive labor organizations.

THOSE business commentators who always hope for the best are expecting the automobile business to revive when the new Ford car appears. Basing their speculations on the fact that the total decline in car production is only slightly larger than the decline in the output of Fords, they look for a large enough demand for the new car, by those who have been waiting for it, to bring back the total to normal. Light on this question shines from a recent report of the Philadelphia Reserve Bank on automobile sales in its district during September. Total registrations for the first six months of the year increased 7.4 percent in Pennsylvania over the same period of last year, while the average increase for the country was 7 percent; therefore the record for this district is not likely to be exceptionally low. In September, the wholesale sales of new passenger cars in the Philadelphia reserve district decreased 11.9 percent from September, 1926; retail sales decreased 3.4 percent; sales of used cars increased 47.16 percent; and retail sales on the instalment plan were 19.8 percent less than a year ago. At the same time, stocks of new cars on hand increased 35.2 percent over a year ago, and of used cars, 35.6 percent. All this is little short of alarming for the automobile industry. How many purchasers are waiting for the new Ford? Presumably, not those who buy in the price class of $1,000 to $2,000, yet this class showed the largest drop of wholesale sales from last year—22.3 percent. On the other hand, stocks of new cars under $1,000 showed the largest increase over a year ago—109 percent. If these cars are not now being absorbed as fast as they have been produced, what will be their chance when the new Ford comes out? It is difficult to extract much hope from these figures.

THE New Republic congratulates the New York Herald Tribune on having appointed Mr. Thomas F. Millard its Far-Eastern correspondent. Mr. Millard, as our readers do not need to be told, is one of the ablest journalists ever to choose the Orient as the scene of his activities. His despatches to the New York Times, over a long period, constituted a landmark in wise and fair reporting; and

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when that journal supplanted him last winter by such a strongly anti-Chinese individual as Mr. Frederick Moore, the New Republic felt a regret which the subsequent record, set forth in our pages, shows, we feel, to have been justified.

ALL sorts of morals are being drawn, by the daily press, from the acquittal of Schwartzbard, tried in a Paris court for the admitted murder of Petlura, ex-President of the Ukraine, who was guilty of some of the cruelest pogroms in modern history. We think most of these morals are unjustified. The Paris jury simply decided that Schwartzbard's act deserved to be regarded as a political crime, not as an ordinary murder, and that Petlura deserved to die. Juries in France, as in America, have a habit of overriding the law to reach an end which they regard as fair, just as they will sometimes find men guilty of crimes they have not committed, in order to express a dislike for these men based on other grounds. In this case, the world in general agrees with the jury, and will not be disposed to question the verdict too closely. The Jews have been solemnly warned not to make Schwartzbard into a racial hero; but the warning is idle. It asks far too much of human nature, to require them to accept this as an ordinary trial.

Constructive Class-Consciousness

IN ANOTHER column of this issue, the editors of the Modern Quarterly, the organ of the American revolutionary socialist intellectuals, ask of the New Republic certain questions which we welcome the opportunity of answering, to the best of our ability. We shall answer them, however, by means of a general discussion of the underlying difference of opinion which the questions imply. Any intelligent person may infer from such a statement of a "liberal," as contrasted with a Communist, social philosophy specific answers to the specific queries.

The questions which, from the point of view of a "liberal," present the most serious difficulties are those which concern the comparative morality of war and revolution. In effect, our correspondents inquire whether a civilization which recognizes international war as a necessary instrument of national policy has any right, morally or logically, to outlaw a rebellious faction which declares revolution and a class dictatorship to be the only method of escaping from class subordination. There may possibly be a satisfactory answer to this question, but the discrepancy to which it calls attention requires a good deal of explaining. It certainly places on those who attach decisive importance to the distinction between the legal and illegal use of force one paramount obligation. They must try to get rid of war. If the industrialized nations cannot agree to outlaw war as a morally respectable method of settling their differences, social order, as it now exists in capitalist states, will be difficult to defend. Fortunately, however, they are coming to recognize this fact. The conscience of modern society is now struggling with problems of getting rid of war as an instrument of political policy. Considering the enormous difficulty of eradicating an institution which is so deeply rooted in social custom and which is so satisfactory to the innate pugnacity of human nature, the outcome of the effort is not wholly discouraging. There is no sufficient reason as yet to abandon it in despair; and the only groups in modern society who are hopeless about it are those who, like the militarists or the Communists, believe for *a priori* reasons that it cannot succeed. As long as there is a reasonable prospect of progress in this direction, it is doubtfully true to say that, unless the wage-earners prepare to fight and die in the warfare against capitalism, their governments will compel them to fight and die for the benefit of their capitalist masters.

The economic and social results of the World War are, of course, responsible for the effort to outlaw war. They demonstrated, to the satisfaction of all honest minds, that for the industrialized societies of today, with their manifold interdependence and their increased ability to mobilize their resources, the organized killing of people in other political groups, in order to vindicate a particular national will, is a vicious anachronism in modern social economy. The price of victory is too great. To this extent the World War, by indirection and by virtue of its sheer destructiveness, taught a lesson which should not need to be repeated. This lesson, be it added, has little to do with the aims of the belligerents or the victory of the Allies. Among other purveyors of "liberal" opinion, the New Republic counseled the participation of the United States in the World War, on the supposition that their interference would contribute to world pacification. We are ready to admit now, as we have admitted before, that the benefits of American intervention on the Wilson program have not measured up to the level which its advocates foreshadowed as a justification for the decision. The New Republic, for instance, entirely miscalculated the effect of entering the War on American popular psychology. We would certainly hesitate a long time before we would again advise our fellow countrymen to participate in a struggle for supremacy among competitive groups of power states, on the pretext that the victory of any one would contribute to the advent of peace on earth. Wars to end wars are delusions. In the light of this experience, the editors of the Modern Quarterly would do well to go slow in advising a powerful block of their wage-earning fellow countrymen to prepare for war with the sovereign state, on the pretext that a proletarian victory would serve to put an end to class conflict within society. Wars either

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between or within states may sometimes be the less of two evils, but if they are to make for subsequent peace, it will usually be a peace which is achieved without victory. The frustrations and disenchantments which the prolongation of the World War brought about, rather than the victory itself, are chiefly responsible for the seriousness of the subsequent effort to organize peace.

If the society of capitalist nations can progress in the attempt to discredit and eventually to outlaw war between nations, it will have a much better chance to mitigate the bitterness and the supposed irreconcilability of the existing conflicts among classes. The democratic state will then feel much freer to deal on their merits with those internal conflicts which are serious enough to demand realistic rather than romantic treatment. The editors of the Modern Quarterly ask us what we mean by "conditional class struggle." We mean by it those limited class struggles which actually occur in Russia, Germany, Great Britain and the United States, as contrasted with the one overwhelming and unlimited class struggle as it is generalized and magnified by Marxian philosophy. There have been many class struggles in American history, and there will be many more. It is necessary to recognize this fact, and it is necessary in particular to face without flinching the unusually serious class struggle which is now threatening the American social fabric. But it is not as yet written in the book of fate that this particular class struggle will, any more inevitably than those which have preceded it, develop into irreconcilable class warfare. It all depends upon future happenings which can be and will be profoundly modified by the intellectual and moral attitudes of American citizens.

At the present time the United States is a plutocracy which is ruled, subject to certain obvious limitations, by successful business men, chiefly in their own interest. They control the two dominant political parties, which are skillfully used to suffocate vital discussion, suppress dangerous or significant issues and keep political contests on the plane of a popular sport. The people are much less interested in this sport than they used to be; but they are hopeless about reforming it, and take out their dissatisfaction by sneering at politics and by refusing to vote. The progressive ideology of twenty years ago has, for the time being, spent its force. The only manual working group which feels discontented with its share of the receipts is the farmers in the western states. Their dissatisfaction assumes forms which are exasperating to business, but they are gradually being discouraged and bought off. The mass of the people, some of the farmers excepted, are more comfortable than they ever have been, and they are also more respectful of constituted authority—parents and husbands excepted. There is no class in the community which is able or willing to challenge the domination of business men. The wage-earners are, for the moment, less disposed to assert themselves than the farmers. They have little or no consciousness of class grievance and little effective desire for class independence. They are as much afraid as the small shopkeeper of doing anything to tamper with prosperity.

The one economic class in the United States whose members are aggressively conscious of their common interests is the business men themselves. They regard their own kind as a sort of natural *élite,* which has emerged by wholesome social selection out of the competition of American life. Government, as they understand it, should seek first, the efficient conduct of the politics of the country by its owners or their representatives in the interest of business, and second, protection against the kind of political or economic agitation which rocks the boat. They are, consequently, quite prepared, if their domination is challenged by discontented or aggressive farmers or wage-earners, to insist wholeheartedly and self-righteously on the maintenance of their existing advantages and power as indispensable to American social order. But it does not follow that they will fasten this sanctification of their success and power permanently on American popular opinion. Owing to the domination of economic motives in American history, and the iron-clad sanctions which American constitutional law attaches to private property, the confidence and presumption of their belief in their right to rule has a certain pragmatic justification. It is a natural consequence of the actual social services of the American business man, of the absence in American history of a landed aristocracy and a monarchy, and of the overwhelming importance which business and the satisfaction of economic wants have always occupied in American life and opinion. It is likely to become more confident and presumptuous before it is corrected, but ominous as certain of its manifestations are, it need not become incorrigible unless it is treated as incorrigible. If, on the contrary, it is treated as one phase in the development of American national consciousness, that is what it is likely to become.

Class-consciousness has not necessarily the socially disintegrating significance which Karl Marx imputes to it. It frequently assumes, no doubt, the form of an intellectual fortification for the unscrupulous assertion or protection of class interests, but if the class-conscious group undertakes economic activities which are alleged to have a social function, the conscious governing faction is bound little by little to compare the results of its supremacy with its declared pretensions. Communism in Russia and capitalism in the United States are both, in this sense and in this only, experiments. The essential activity of consciousness is not loyalty to pugnacious emotional conclusions, but a kind of irresistible curiosity which feeds upon the methodical observation of projected results. Just in so far as any such conscience is aroused with respect to the consequences of class behavior, class-consciousness may

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cease to be an agency of class arrogance and delusion and become a preliminary stage in class education. It will help class-conscious business men to become aware of their functional position in American society, as contrasted with that of other classes such as the farmers, the wage-earners and the professional experts.

Class-consciousness which is fertilized by the observation of its own activities may contribute quite as much to class differentiation as it does to class solidarity. The actively inquisitive members of the class will be driven to separate the whole body of business into individual industries and to investigate the different processes whereby these particular industries carry on their work. From the functional point of view, capitalism is not one, but many activities, which pursue different careers and invite different comments. A conscious capitalism whose attention is allowed to fasten on its own behavior will employ its curiosity to separate the sheep from the goats, to encourage the former and discourage the latter. American capitalism, as it becomes more conscious, is becoming in some of its manifestations more domineering, but in others it is becoming more discriminating and more responsible in relation to its own performances.

At all events, that is the anticipation upon which "liberals" act and which, by acting in this way, they may help to realize. Individually, these liberals may belong to any of the existing classes, and if class warfare were precipitated, they might be driven to fight on one side or the other, but it is their particular business not to capitulate to a moral culture which endorses a dictatorship by any class in the supposed interest of a preconceived consummation. It is, on the contrary, particularly their business to divorce social consciousness from dogmas, prophecies, prescriptions or conclusions, and to associate it with the intimate and relentless observation of processes. They are presumably people who, besides being liberals, practise some occupation or participate in certain social activities. As liberals, their attitude towards these occupations and activities will be one of watchfulness and curiosity rather than one of aggressive or defensive approval or disapproval. A society whose activities are fully recorded and indefatigably watched will, in the long run, be a society whose activities will bear watching. The New Republic welcomes the increasing class-consciousness of American capitalists, because it will probably, in the long run, lead them to regard their business activities as processes which they can control and protect by watching rather than by arming for war. We hope and believe that the other economic classes, such as the wage-earners, the farmers and the professional experts, will assert their collective importance and independence by an analogous cultivation of class-consciousness. What a wholesome society needs is not the domination of any one class but an adjustable balance among the classes, which is envisaged and realized by the cultivation of class leaders of an awareness of the results of class behavior. The problem for liberals which they have not in the past sufficiently posed to themselves is that of creating and perpetuating a national public opinion which would permit such functional class-consciousness to develop and to operate.

States' Rights in Inheritance Taxes

BEHIND the renewed agitation for repeal of the federal estate-tax stand in solid ranks the President and the Secretary of the Treasury, the United States Chamber of Commerce, state legislators by the hundred, polled on the question by the well financed organizations who are agitating it, and many others—in short, a goodly portion of the organized wealth of the country. Some of these gentlemen believe, and frankly say, that they are opposed to any inheritance tax, no matter by whom levied. To such honorable combatants this article is not addressed. But if the issue were to be fought in the open on this ground, the agitation for repeal would lose much of its force. The most persuasive arguments, which have aroused the greatest volume of support, are those which allege that estate or inheritance taxation is the proper province of the states; that the intrusion of the federal government into this field causes unwarranted duplication and confusion. Such arguments are probably as dishonest at their source as they are unsound in their substance. The main purpose of these arguments is, as the main result of repeal would be, to render inheritance taxation ineffective even when levied by the states.

The uncertainty of state inheritance-taxation arises from two sources—the inequality of the several state laws, and the difference in efficiency of enforcement. It is well known by this time that Florida not only has no inheritance tax, but has a constitutional provision against the enactment of one. It is not so well known that there are significant differences among the other states—as between New York and New Jersey. In a New York newspaper recently appeared the following advertisement of a New Jersey bank, situated within a few minutes of Wall Street:

> SPECIAL PRIVILEGES
>
> New Jersey laws give to non-residents banking privileges unobtainable in New York in the event of death.
>
> Explanatory leaflet E on request.

Illegal evasion and legal avoidance of state laws are both easy to practise, and are practised. Brown, let us say, being a resident of one state, owns a safe-deposit box in another state, to which both he and his daughter have access. The existence of

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this box and of its contents is not known in his place of residence. Brown dies. His daughter, without the knowledge of any responsible person in her father's state of domicile, goes to the safe deposit and removes a large amount in cash, bonds and securities. Nobody in the state where the box is held has official knowledge of her father's death; nobody has any interest or duty in helping the other state enforce its laws. The law is evaded with perfect impunity, at the price merely of silence. Such evasion cannot be stopped without efficient federal machinery.

If a person is too squeamish to practise deception, he may readily resort to legal avoidance. Smith owns property in numerous states, which would normally be subject to the inheritance-tax laws of those states upon his death. But he forms a corporation in his own state, and transfers to it the title to these scattered properties. Smith dies. His property—consisting of shares in the corporation—is subject to any inheritance tax which may exist in the state in which he is domiciled. But the corporation does not die. Its property is not, therefore, subject to inheritance taxation anywhere. Smith avoids the tax in every state but one. And if he and his corporation happen to be domiciled in Florida, no tax is collected by any state. If it were not for the federal law, the states which wish to collect inheritance taxes would be cheated out of any return whatever. When a maneuver of this nature is so easy, only complaisance on the part of men of wealth would permit the collection of state or inheritance levies from their executors by any authority, were the federal estate-tax repealed.

Perhaps the most vicious feature of this situation is that those who have the larger fortunes, and are supposed to bear the larger burdens of the tax by virtue of progressive rates, can most easily avoid it. They have the requisite legal and accounting advice, and the means necessary for indirect administration. The smaller inheritances, consisting of property difficult to incorporate and domicile in distant states, cannot escape so easily.

Probably many possessors of fortunes who are pleading the sacred cause of states' rights in inheritance taxation are found at the same time among those who take an over-realistic view of interstate competition, when it comes to laws regulating the employment of women and children, or to dealing with labor. You must never, they say, try to limit hours to forty-eight in this state, we must never consent to unionization or higher wages, because in that case some other state with lower standards would take away all our business. Yet competition of this type is indirect and uncertain, it is limited by all sorts of other factors, such as favorable geographical location, efficiency, skill and control of markets. Interstate competition in inheritance taxation, however, is direct and immediate. You can transfer a domicile from one state to another, or rent a safe-deposit box, or form a dummy corporation, much more easily than you can move a factory or succumb to competition in the markets. Why do not these gentlemen point out that the certain result of varying state standards in inheritance taxation will be a drifting of estates outside the jurisdiction of the higher standards? They do not say so, of course, because they want to furnish part of the drift. With the federal law out of the way, the rest will be easy.

If one wants to be a dogmatic states'-righter, he may declare that the exclusive right of the states to collect inheritance taxes is so sacred that it is worth supporting even at the cost of rendering the states unable to collect the taxes. But no less Pyrrhic a victory for states' rights is possible in this matter. The right of the states actually to benefit from inheritance taxation can be kept secure only by the intervention of the federal government.

Should Investment Be Regulated?

SENATOR CARTER GLASS'S outcry against the censorship by the Department of State of private foreign loans seems to rest insecurely on three legs. One is legalistic—that the Constitution gives the President no such power. One is an objection to the policy—or lack of policy—which has been revealed in the specific approvals or disapprovals of foreign loans. The third is the general doctrine that the political government should not interfere in such economic matters. Senator Glass does not himself distinguish sharply these separate grounds of objection, but for the sake of clarity it is well to remember them.

The first objection does not worry us much. It may be true that, if the executive were to have the legal power to forbid bankers from underwriting specific loans, it could gain that power only from Congress. But no such absolute power is claimed. If a banker were to issue a loan disapproved by the State Department, he could not be fined or sent to jail. He would merely run the risk of losing money and prestige, since, if the administration made a statement saying that the loan in question was contrary to public policy, investors might not be eager to take it up, and the financiers who floated it might suffer from criticism. Surely the executive has a right to issue such statements. And if, in an effort to coöperate with the State Department, as well as to avoid censure, bankers are willing to submit their proposed issues for approval, nobody can say they are violating the Constitution.

The practice of this censorship may well, however, be subjected to careful scrutiny. Its purposes were understood to be closely allied with the major diplomatic and commercial aims of the administration. Loans to nations which did not acknowledge, or make steps to pay, their indebtedness to this

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government, were to be barred. Loans were to be denied to foreign monopolies, which could exploit the American market by screwing up prices. And loans were to be discouraged which were to be used for non-productive purposes—and especially for military ones. It was felt that such loans would hinder, rather than help, European nations to discharge their obligations to us. Published disapproval of specific loans has been infrequent since the practice was adopted. A proposed loan to facilitate trade between Germany and Russia was disallowed, technically because Russia had not recognized the Kerensky government's debt to this country. The recent Prussian loan was approved only after assurances had been given that it would be used for "productive" purposes. One or two minor proposals have been frowned upon. In the main, however, the effect of the policy can be guessed only on the basis of its announced aims. For loans which are sure to be denounced are not likely to be proposed—at least publicly. The embargo on loans to France until she settles the debt controversy must constitute, for instance, a weapon in the hands of the State Department. (The recent refunding loan was permitted because it obviously did not enlarge France's commitments to this country.)

The reason for the importance of these specific applications of the loan censorship, the reason why they should be investigated and discussed, is precisely the same as the reason for examining and criticizing the diplomatic aims which they reinforce. We sincerely hope that Senator Glass and others will look into the implications of our official policy in trying to extract such large and long-continued payments of the war debt from France; that they will examine the inter-relations of our tariff, the efforts of Europe to pay her debts to us, and her tendency to form monopolies and exploit us commercially in every way she can. We hope these critics will question the wisdom of requiring Russia to recognize the Kerensky debt before having any relationships with her or letting her have the capital she needs. And we hope they will go further into the question of which loans are "productive," and how productive they are, and how money loaned to a country for productive purposes can fail to release funds for non-productive purposes. But it must be admitted that these are all matters of major administration policy, not matters of loan censorship primarily. If Senator Glass approves the policy, he surely would not want the bankers, acting independently, to undermine it. If he disapproves the policy, he should not be side-tracked into fulminations against the censorship of loans.

He should not, that is, unless he is a blind adherent of *laissez-faire* doctrine, believing that individuals free to seek their own interest will somehow, some time, bring about results that are in the best interests of all. Here are bankers, whose business is primarily to earn profits by underwriting and floating loans. In order to conduct this business with success, they must maintain a certain amount of confidence by not offering issues which involve too much risk. And they must offer a high enough return to induce purchasers to buy the loans. As intermediaries between borrower and investor, they succeed by bringing them together. But is it necessarily true that every bringing together of borrower and lender, with a profit to the banker, is in the general interest? By no means. Even if the banker is sufficiently careful of all the complex elements—including political ones—that affect safety, he may be furthering a development which is not best suited to the public interest. In this respect, there is no great distinction beween international and domestic loans. The investment of capital determines the allocation of man-power, the use of available materials, and has much to do with the distribution of wealth. In a planned economy, it would be the master key in the hands of the board of industrial and social strategy. We do not know enough yet to operate a fully planned economy, and so we put up with a largely haphazard one. But we do know enough to be aware that it is not the best of all possible orders simply because it is haphazard.

The censorship of loans is, therefore, not an unwarranted political intrusion into a sacred realm of economic activity, where government does not belong. It is a significant step in the direction of more social control of the economic order. Blunderingly or unintelligently as it may be exercised, the proper complaint is against the purposes or knowledge which inform its use, rather than against the fact that it is exercised at all. An expert and progressive administration, with a department of internal welfare which was as zealous for the interests of our population at home as the Department of State is for our supposed interests abroad, could doubtless exert a regulatory influence over investments which would be most salutary. To argue that the organized public has no concern with how our surplus is used, whether at home or abroad, is to be more reactionary and conservative than the administration itself.

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The British Parties in Conference

THIS may be regarded as the pre-presidential year in English politics. All parties are aware that a general election cannot be postponed for much more than a year; and all are searching furiously for issues, programs, measures, which may prove palatable to the electorate when the moment for decision arrives. The recent week which saw the Annual Conference of the Conservative and Labor parties was, therefore, of peculiar importance as an indication of their mood. It told us the direction in which the wind is blowing, the ends that each has set before itself. And since each conference had the great merit of reflecting clearly the mind of its members, save for the not unlikely interposition of a new situation, we can be tolerably certain of the road along which each will travel.

The Conservative Conference is a body for securing an index to opinion, not a body for making decisions. The leaders do not pay it the compliment of taking any essential part in its proceedings. Mr. Baldwin, it is true, came to Cardiff, but it was merely to address a public meeting. He had not much to say, though he said it vigorously. He believed that England would one day become prosperous again. He had told Canada—a great country—with emphasis, that this was the case. He was going to enfranchise women between the ages of twenty-one and thirty. Maybe he would do something about the House of Lords; at any rate, he would look into it again this winter. He hoped the farming industry would do better; and he informed Lord Rothermere that if he was not prepared to accept the present Conservative leadership, he wanted no advice from the Daily Mail. All in all, it was a pleasant speech from a pleasant man, blind to the future and bankrupt of ideas. He had nothing to say of the terrible position in the coal industry, with its 250,000 unemployed; he said not a word to defend the lamentable British showing at Geneva. He is the Micawber of English politics, waiting, with a wordy optimism, for something to turn up. He seems to feel that British trade is so bad that it cannot conceivably be worse. Things, therefore, must sooner or later improve, and he hopes to benefit by the good will the improvement must engender. But his own Ministry of Labor is clearly less optimistic; for its draft revision of the Blanesburgh scheme for unemployment insurance specifically rejects an estimate of 6 percent as normal and calculates upon a much larger number of unemployed.

The Conference itself was pathetic. It sulkily accepted the widening of the franchise. It passionately demanded the reform of the House of Lords, and contemptuously rejected a proposal of Lord Londonderry for its postponement. What reform it had in view was not specified; but it was clear to the delegates that property must be safeguarded against a future Labor government while there is yet time. A majority such as this, the delegates seemed to argue, is a gift the gods are unlikely to repeat; what is the good of it if it is not used to destroy the prospects of your opponents? The Conference was enthusiastic about the safeguarding of industries, Mr. Baldwin's dubiously honest substitute for a protective tariff; and it heaved a sigh of relief when Lord Eustace Percy (surely the worst Education Minister of modern times) confided to the delegates that for five, or seven, or ten years at any rate, he would not raise the school-leaving age to fifteen (as the Hadow Committee in a recent unanimous report demanded). The Conservative idea of education is that: (a) we cannot afford it; and (b) there is too much of it already. The Conference ended by going on record in favor of an adequate navy; no disarmament, said a delegate, until we are sure our neighbors are disarming likewise. A demand for leasehold enfranchisement, a safeguard which every small householder and shopkeeper has had for ages in America, was turned down with contempt. The land-owner, so far as Conservatism is concerned, is still to remain the residuary legatee of other people's energies.

The Conservative Conference may fairly be described as reactionary; that of the Labor party was not less definitely conservative. Throughout, it was dominated by the executive, or, in American parlance, the machine. The voice of the Communist was hardly heard; and such proposals as the left wing ventured to make were annihilated by crushing majorities. The Conference would have nothing to do with the plan (passed three times, almost unanimously, by the National Women's Labor Conference) for making information on birth control available, where desired, at Maternity Welfare Centers. It rejected out of hand a proposal from the Independent Labor party for a further attempt at unity with Russia. A demand for a general strike in the event of war was laughed out of court. What the Conference did was to accept a proposal for placing a surtax on unearned incomes of more than £500 a year; to agree to inquire into the feasibility of nationalizing the Bank of England; to affirm its faith in the nationalization of the mines and demand, meanwhile, an extended application of the Samuel Report; to demand the raising of the school-leaving age to fifteen years; and to ask Mr. MacDonald and the executive to find a program for the party, reporting, if need be, to a special conference.

I think it is true to say that not a single proposal was accepted by the Conference which could even remotely be called socialistic; one eminent delegate,

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indeed, definitely asked for the exclusion of such proposals, on the ground that they antagonized Tory trade-unionists. The surtax apart, the executive has a free hand to do what it likes. It will keep its present voters, using the new Trade Disputes Act and the fear of a reformed House of Lords, as the levers to safeguard their allegiance; and it will seek new voters, especially in the agricultural districts and the suburbs, by constructing a program which will not frighten the reader of the Daily Mail. The present *mot d'ordre* is respectability. "We have no dealings," the leaders want to say, "with Russia; our taxation schemes are the model of 1922; we may not even (though it would worry no one) nationalize the mines; and a little educational reform will really harm no one." Anyone who reads the famous program of 1918 and compares it with the proceedings of the present Conference will be driven to wonder if it is with the same party that he is concerned.

What is the explanation? I believe it lies in three things. First, there is the widespread irritation with Russia and the Communists. They lie, they intrigue, they falsify, they distort, they indulge in vile personal abuse, and then express astonishment that a fraternal hand is not extended to them. Whatever comes just now from a source suspected of Communist leanings is sure of a whole-hearted rejection from any Labor conference. Second, the aftermath of the general strike has lowered the vitality, and, consequently, the optimism of Labor. Its partisans now believe that a thorough-going victory lies in the distant future. Capitalism is far stronger than they realized; they are unwilling to risk anything which seems remotely like a frontal attack upon its citadel. Third, the leaders have a view of the present political situation which calls imperatively for moderation. Mr. MacDonald himself has something like a horror of ideas; he is interested in the play of the parliamentary arena. He does not welcome anything which might jeopardize his power to dominate it. Mr. Snowden has largely ceased to be a socialist, and, in any case, he is a convinced adherent of Liberal-Labor coöperation; he wants nothing which might endanger its possibility. Mr. Thomas never was a socialist; he is a brilliantly clever Trade Unionist Imperialist, a thorough political democrat, but without any profound interest in schemes or theories of economic reconstruction. What interests him is the moment; he can always take care of the morrow by an expedient invented twenty minutes before it is necessary. Mr. Henderson, than whom no party ever had an abler or more devoted organizer, is naturally concerned with its mechanical rather than its intellectual problems.

The next election is bound to be a contest with two unknowns. There will be the 5,000,000 new voters, and there will be the Liberal party. On a balance of probabilities, the situation of 1924 will repeat itself. Labor will be, as now, the second largest party; but it will be unable itself to control the House. The present leadership seems to be striving for two things. This is an age of vast electoral turn-overs, and it is gambling on moderation to win for it a real majority. Alternatively, it wants an increased membership which will enable it to take office in comfortable relations with a possibly increased Liberal representation, or, if need be, to act as the predominant partner in an attempt at a joint administration. Hence what it is, I believe, fashionable to call a "realist" policy, which means a small number of small measures which are radical in the sense of 1906 and do not outrage the non-socialist conscience. Power, in other words, lies nearly ahead; and the machine cannot bring itself to think and dare boldly lest it lose the chance of power. Ideas and ideals are, therefore, for the moment at a discount.

It is exceedingly probable that the "realists" will win office on the view they are taking. The present government is so bad, and the electorate so much in advance of its opinions and legislation, that any mildly progressive party is bound to deflect numberless votes from it. If wisdom, therefore, consists essentially in winning the next election, Mr. MacDonald and his colleagues are wise. But there are other things to remember. The driving-power of Labor in the country is its idealism. It has offered, especially to the young, the prospect of translating great hopes into fruition. It is because that was the case that it won the allegiance of men like Massingham, Bertrand Russell, H. G. Wells, H. N. Brailsford. If it is merely to become the alternative to the Conservative party, with a philosophy that is as related to socialism as a jerry-built house to Westminster Abbey, it will not continue to attract those who still venture to dream of a new world built by high courage and arduous effort. The Blackpool Conference seemed to me very like a meeting of Kerenskys; and it was the good fortune of the Labor party that there is no one among the Communists with the tactical skill and organizing power of Lenin. And even so moderate a leader as Keir Hardie, looking at the resolutions, would have thought that he was back in the nineties of the last century. If the Labor party is to fulfill its historic mission, it will have to seek a new temper and a more audacious policy. Its present mood makes Mr. Lloyd-George look like a reckless Bolshevist.

HAROLD J. LASKI.

London.

Philosophy

I can hold my two hands anywhere
Around a world not really there
And call it a world much better than this,
But I am not so sure it is.

WITTER BYNNER.

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Confessions of a Non-Voter

IT can be proved up to the hilt and in many ways that politics, from which flows all laws, ordinances, rules, regulations, taxes and governments, affects every one of us so directly, deeply, intimately and inescapably that failure to take an intelligent interest therein seems, theoretically at least, an indefensible thing. So I have always felt —still do, for that matter. To me, however, taking an intelligent interest does not mean going to the polls on election day and voting—not by a long shot. I used to vibrate to that "it-is-the-duty-of-every-citizen-to-vote" stuff, but no longer. I used to worry over the shrinkage in the general election figures and shudder over the fate of a Republic left in the lurch by the so-called intelligent voter. I used to sympathize with the various "get-out-the-vote" movements in different campaigns, and I was even impressed by the solemnity of presidential utterances lamenting the tendency of the people not to participate in the selection of their own government.

But all that was before my head cleared about politics, before I got a close view of the facts. Now, while I am fully aware that there are ways of taking an intelligent interest and making the interest effective, too, I am no longer under the delusion that voting is one of them. For the non-job-seeking man, without machine relations or obligations, voting is a perfectly foolish and futile thing, a complete waste of time. It is true that I am a not unsophisticated person and that the sordid side of politics has at different periods and in different sections been revealed to me. I should like it understood, however, that I do not make this declaration in any cynical or superior sense. I am not looking down on politics from the heights. I do not feel that politics is any dirtier, as a game, than banking or business, and however new the idea may be, the proportion of decent men practising politics is certainly equal to the proportion of decent men practising law. I am not complaining of the "evils of politics." I am merely expressing the conclusions forced on me by a study of conditions and a knowledge of the facts, simply presenting the reasons why I, who at one time so regularly and conscientiously cast my pure, unpurchasable ballot, no longer participate as a voter in any election held in the large city in which I live. In the first place, I have been reluctantly, but very thoroughly convinced that, given their free and untrammelled choice between a good man and a poor one, the American people, barring accidents, can be depended upon with unerring accuracy to pick the latter. As between shoddy goods and real goods presented to them at the polling places, if let alone, they will choose the shoddy almost every time. This tendency is so strong, in the great bulk of the people, that if all the intelligent and discriminating voters solidly voted the other way, they would not change the result. I do not believe many observant, politically informed persons will dispute that statement. It can be proved by a hundred recent instances; the exceptions are just numerous enough to establish the rule. To this inherent inclination toward inferiority and mediocrity there is to be added the present enormous indifference to political principles and issues and to candidatorial merit, due partly to inability to comprehend, and partly to sheer inertia. There may have been a time when it was possible to get a real response from the masses on a moral issue, and there certainly was a time when there existed a militant, formidable and occasionally successful anti-machine sentiment. But those days are long gone by. With the growth in urban population, the extension of the suffrage to women, the increase in popular prejudice and passion, the diminished clarity and truthfulness of newspaper political presentations, the rise of cliques and Klans and Leagues, the enervating effect of long continued prosperity, there has come a period of unprecedented political bewilderment, confusion and indifference, against which all the intelligent and independent voters in the country—not so many, at that—are about as potent as a sardine against a whale. It is my conviction that these conditions, which I think will be generally conceded to exist, make it altogether useless for a politically independent person to vote—and for these reasons:

First, because they have tremendously strengthened the city machines, which are now practically invincible.

Second, because even if there were any chance to win, the incredible size of the ballot and the multitude of candidates in most elections render discriminating voting in a great city a simple impossibility. Not even the machine workers themselves can do it without a sample ballot. Except for one or two names at the head of the ticket, it is impossible for any voter to vote other than blindly. It is impossible to get information as to the candidates. There is no available source. There are no ways for the so-called intelligent voter to know what is the intelligent thing to do.

It is true that these conditions are not exactly new and that they all existed, to a certain extent, at least, including the stupidity and inertia of the people, during the period when I was a regular voter, righteously determined to "do my duty as a citizen," scornful of those who failed to register and vote. My answer is, first, that I was not clear-headed enough at the time to recognize the complete futility of the thing; and, second, that

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the odds against the discriminating voter were never as great as they are today; that it has become far plainer now than ever before that the cards are beautifully stacked against the so-called intelligent voter; that there is no way for him to be really intelligent; that when his side wins, it is never *because* it is his side. He merely happened to be there. To present the reasons fully would require far more space than is here available. It is enough to say that today city machines are unbeatable from the outside. Sometimes they crack from the inside, but it is due to no force or threat or fight by the non-machine voters, and the idea that these hold the balance of power is pure bunk. The ability of the machines to marshal the moronic masses will always swamp the so-called intelligent voters, even if they were intelligent enough to vote as a unit, which they are not. Divided as they always are and always will be, they are a joke.

In the first place, there are not enough of them; in the second place, they don't know enough, and apparently can't learn enough, about politics to count. For example, outside of the South and a few heavily Republican states such as Iowa, where one party is so overwhelmingly in the majority that the primary is the only contest—outside of these states, the great bulk of the allegedly discriminating voters regard the primaries as unimportant and concentrate on holding "the balance of power" in the general election. The utter dumbness of this ought to be plain to a baby. It is plain to anyone who thinks at all. But no way has been found in any state, except those before mentioned, of inducing the non-machine voter to take part in the primaries. Yet the primaries are really the key to all politics, infinitely and obviously more vital than the general elections. Before aspirants for elective office can get on the general election ballot, they must all pass through the primary gate. There is no other way. Control of that gate is control of the whole situation. By holding it, the machine is enabled to limit everybody's choice in the general election to its choice in the primary election.

Even in those states where the primaries are the only real contest, the machines are almost always invincible. In the rest of the country—and particularly in every city of more than half a million—the machine is so overwhelmingly dominant in the primaries that it is ridiculous to oppose it. Not enough independent voters can be induced to regard them as important, to make the machine know they are there. The general-election voters have so steadily diminished in nearly all sections in the past twelve years that it is only by the most tremendous beating of the bushes that 50 percent of those qualified can now be got to the polls in a presidential election. But this is not a marker to what has happened in the primaries. In the primaries, the proportion of voters qualified to participate is rarely as much as one-third, outside of the South, and in many cities is frequently less than one-twentieth, of the qualified voters. This means, of course, that none but the organization people participate. Even in the South, where there is nothing to politics at all save the primaries, the general election being a mere ratification of the Democratic choice—even there, the primary vote is often ridiculously low and the organization control almost as inevitable as in the states where people are more or less evenly divided between the two parties.

The failure of the independents to vote in the primaries is illogical, and strengthens the hold of the machine on the gate; and their failure to vote in the general election is getting more marked every year. Still, if they all voted—the intelligent and independent citizens, I mean—in both primaries and general election, they would not affect the situation. I repeat, there are not enough of them. In the primaries, where the real choice of candidates is made, the power of the professional is beyond dispute, and there is never any uncertainty as to the result there, as between organization candidates and anti-organization candidates. When it comes to the general election, the independent man has a fine choice—between two machine-selected tickets, with the choosing of which he had nothing whatever to do. The uncertainty as to results in general elections does not, as it has been the custom to contend, hinge upon the course of the independent and intelligent voter who casts a ballot free from partisanship and prejudice. Not at all. It hinges upon the question of which machine, with money and demagogic appeal, is most skillful in enlisting on its side the mass of voters who are swayed by emotion rather than reason—98 percent of them all.

It seems to me absurd to vote, if all you want is good government, and I do not do it any longer. In refraining from voting, I do not believe that I either strengthen the professional in politics or set a bad example to other citizens. On the contrary, it is interesting to know that the machine, far from desiring the non-machine voters to stay away from the polls, is more concerned than anyone else about the falling off in the vote. If it were not for the efforts of the machine, beyond doubt far fewer votes would be cast than are now. If it were not for the efforts of the machine, the proportion of voters in presidential elections would be far below 50 percent. The more clear-headed professional politicians agree that if the non-voting habit gets much more prevalent, the failure of the American political system will be so apparent that something radical may be done about it. They don't want anything done about it. It suits them as it is; and they very much wish the non-machine voter would take a little more interest in politics, vote a little more regularly and numerously, so as to insure permanency for the system.

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So I am not playing the machine game if I stay away from the polls. Actually, I am doing the thing that in the long run will bring about a change. As to the present, I exert my political influence by a small but regular campaign contribution in my community—sent through a channel that keeps my name off the records and insures the money's getting to the right person in the most convenient way. I find it much appreciated. I find that I have a good deal more political influence now when I contribute but do not vote than when I voted but did not contribute.

Baltimore

City of Average Men

AT ONE o'clock in the morning, sometimes as late as two, dishes rattle in the Childs restaurant on Charles Street, and there is the murmur of conversation. And that is all the night life there is in Baltimore.

Don Juan would have difficulty in finding more if he passed through Maryland with Mephisto in a modern search for wickedness. Baltimore is not a Babylonian city. Looking out upon it in the evening, say from the Belvedere Hotel, on Mount Vernon Place, lush as Kensington Gardens, and on the little homes with their white steps (62 percent of Baltimoreans own their homes, c.f. Association of Commerce) it is difficult to believe that this city, if it is a city, can be other than decorous and respectable.

In Tennessee Mr. Mencken may have horns, but here he lives quietly on Hollins Street with his mother. In Westerville, Ohio, this is a boozy place, but should a sensitive explorer of souls like Count Keyserling come here to examine its *ethos* he would not be moved to any flaming passages. Baltimore is no violent leavening lump like Detroit, no industrial circus like Chicago, nor is there anything about its progress to lead one to suppose that it may evolve into some fantastic New Jerusalem.

The city is middle-aged in spirit, tolerant except on Sundays, when blue laws are rampant, and conservative with a veneer of impishness that sometimes descends to small-town humor. There are no fierce strivings of enthusiasm; Baltimore keeps its shirt on, clean and laundered, in the midst of a Billy Sunday revival or the beginnings of a great war. Somehow it seems to disdain, or be incapable of, excitement; its collective mind is as unruffled as the flow of a Trollope novel. On its principal streets, people do their shopping and carry on their business leisurely and placidly. One does not feel here the restlessness of a striving city. Here no gypsy fiddles cry. Even representative young men and women are not particularly noisy or gay. Labor and radical meetings are sedate and eminently reasonable. Far-fetched desires and a clamor for change are as foreign as the hullaballoo of a subway or street parade.

The heart of the city is discoverable in the physical Baltimore. Its architecture combines the faint and mellow prettiness of fifty years ago with the rubber-stamp multiplication of block houses and the results of some not too buoyant efforts to be modern. Nothing soars or overwhelms. Baltimore is not an ugly city, and it is not lovely; it has not the hard brilliance of stone and steel, but neither does it possess fully a living, generous charm. It has avoided the beautiful and the monstrous together, but were instances of either to exist, they would straightway be absorbed into the average and cease to be things for contemplation. The stores have not the sparkle of those in many other cities. Often they are dowdy, like some housewife whose energies have been spent during the day in charitable labors, and the decorations in the windows breathe the spirit of goods appearing in advertisements in Capper's Weekly rather than the New Yorker.

Baltimore protects its dwellings with a mother's care and anxiety, and is aroused to its most sincere and loudest protests by every move that might possibly make for intrusions into its residential sections. The large, sprawling districts that surround the downtown neighborhood are mere repetitions of the city's symbol—the rows of houses, each with its front lawn or back yard, its wire or whitewashed board fences, its little tiers of steps, its six or eight rooms, its oatmeal wall-paper. Even when—in the case of important citizens—the home assumes somewhat grandiose proportions, it still is distinctly Baltimorean in nature. Apartment houses, despite recent additions, are decidedly fewer and less luxurious than in other cities. There is actually little need for them, and to Baltimore they seem imported and unfortunate things, to be regarded with distrust.

Distinctly a place of the great middle class, Baltimore tends the needs of that class with high caution. Salaries, particularly in the unskilled trades and white-collar occupations, may be notoriously low, but then, so are rents; and both are commensurate with the average citizen's ambitions. Poverty exists, but it is hardly a violently obvious thing. Instalment buying is rampant, and for a down payment one can buy a baby grand, have the roof repaired or install a new porcelain sink. Quite naturally, home buying and home furnishing thus are encouraged by being made to seem the most de-

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sirable and the easiest of things. That, too, is why the city responds to no industrial program that would sacrifice its parks and squares, its little private gardens and its easy-chair atmosphere. The suburbs, with their neat and unshapely cottages, are goals for attainment and promises of the good life. In the moderate house and the moderate office building Baltimore finds its happiness.

There are, of course, an Association of Commerce, and boosting bureaus and individuals who spout rousing phrases about "the gateway of the South." The late A. S. Goldsborough was an example of a most indefatigable man burdened with the vision of a "port of opportunity," which should abound in plants and factories, a spider web of railroads, a picture puzzle of boats. And Mr. Goldsborough and his successors have had a deal to say in their confident, superlative manner. So, while a large coterie insists that Baltimore is not mellow enough, and that old times are passing, Mr. Hearst and the Association find there are too much mellowness and too few smokestacks, although, diplomatically, they do not say it in quite that way. They make their concessions to "culture," but their demand for a population of 1,000,000 is insistent. As yet, however, Baltimore does not put its faith in college-yell advertising.

The fact is, the city knows itself too well. The younger cities of the Middle West can mold themselves, or have been molded, to fit in with a Ford philosophy, without the calisthenics that more mature bones find necessary for such a transformation. Baltimore is wary of strain, and does not welcome sudden and violent exercise. The roots of propriety go too deep; the town is not cosmopolitan enough to support even one large good restaurant of the continental sort, and too sedate to put up with an Aimee Semple McPherson, even as a spectacle.

It seems paradoxical that Baltimore should call forth the anathemas of the reformers, for, though it may not be pious in a restricted evangelical sense, it has many of the virtues which the average man refers to as goodness. Possibly it is the city's complacency that teases them into criticisms. The racing population is large; but this is no Tia Juana, and the horsey crowds, on inspection, emerge as materfamilias and paterfamilias innocently enjoying themselves. Baltimore is "wet," but this is out of a feeling for liberty in the Anglo-Saxon sense, rather than any craving for liquor. Bad whiskey and gin are consumed with bravado, in the spirit that moved Barbara Frietchie when she waved her mythical flag. Moreover, the city prides itself on its administration of justice, into which something of this independent spirit is translated. Criminal cases are brought to trial at a speed in excess of that at the Old Bailey, London. On Monday, August 16, of this year, a man attempted to hold up the proprietor of a local theater. On Thursday, August 19, he was sentenced to twenty years in the penitentiary, after a trial lasting precisely forty minutes. Sixty hours after the commission of the crime, he had begun to serve his term.

The Sun, whose history goes back into the early Victorian era, is a newspaper as carefully put together as a new issue of the gospel. And for its readers, it is the gospel. Democratic and international in spirit, many of its issues would make as acceptable reading at breakfast tables in Geneva as in Baltimore. Recently, however, papers of the more ebullient sort have been making headway, and though the Sun's influence remains unimpaired, or nearly so, it has not a monopoly of circulation.

Essentially the laws of an indefinite "good breeding" regulate the tempo of social life in Baltimore, and the ideal of a native in "snappy clothes and a snappy car" seems as improper and unimportant to the majority as Greenwich Village is to a professor at the Johns Hopkins University. What self-consciousness the city has resembles that of a conservative merchant whose eyes are on decorum as much as anything.

Such, too, is the standard that carries over into the cultural aspect of Baltimore. It supports no large and original group of intellectuals; only for its doctors and its Hopkins is it in any way remarkable, and Hopkins' own prestige and greatness make it a university that is in, rather than of, the city. Roughly, the background is one of a not too passionate Catholicism and a rather taken-for-granted adherence to the Democratic party of Jefferson, Professor Latané and Mr. "Sonny" Mahon. Baltimore, it is often said, is liberal and generous; yet the fact remains that it rarely has been confronted with any problems or found itself in a situation where liberality and mental generosity would be distinguishing. That it does not row over evolution or Mr. Sinclair's "Oil!" is true, but there is more than a suspicion that the reason is, it takes such things none too seriously. To the Baltimorean these are diversions with only a small estate in his life. With its more than 800,000 population, it supports three book stores and two second-hand book shops, and apparently makes out quite well with them. Its tastes are guided by the popular periodicals and the city's one five-column book page. Nowhere can there be found for sale either a French or English magazine—save Mr. Squire's Mercury.

There is the library—for years a dreary study in aged clerks, faulty indices and unwise choices. Housed in an architectural fright reminiscent of a Victorian bathroom, it permitted the drawing of one book at a time, and those who used their cards were held slightly suspect. Although it still occupies its forbidding quarters, it lately has acquired open shelves and a brighter air; one may draw three books. Yet it probably could have continued in its original condition without serious protest.

Until very recently, an art museum was an unheard-of thing, and when at last one was founded, it was housed in a private dwelling, delightful

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enough in itself, but wholly unfitted for exhibitions or for stimulating interest in its few permanent collections. There is a school of art that does not know that there have been new movements since Monet died, and instruction follows a stereotyped old technique. Nor are the teachers "amused" when children experiment with new methods or forms. Some months ago, the school excelled itself by refusing a gifted pupil permission to exhibit her works because they were not in the conventional manner. "Modern art," said the director, when asked to give his views on the art of Cézanne and Renoir and others, "is poppycock." And "poppycock" it still remains in Baltimore.

There are the theaters—two of them; a third recently was razed to make room for a movie—and either one or the other is "dark" four or five weeks each season. Both close early, and both find business far from encouraging. The Baltimorean who goes out for an evening's entertainment looks to Lon Chaney rather than to John Golden, Belasco or Shubert. Many explanations have been offered for the decline of the stage in the city, but the simplest seems to be that the movies have run it out of business. The theaters stand at ease while the movie parlors advance at the double, each new one being more provincially gorgeous than the last.

This season, a stock company, which happens to be a good one, has played to comfortably filled houses that often have been moved to warm approval, but its success is not likely to halt the floods of its rival's patrons. Baltimore wants a *pleasant* evening's entertainment—a revue filled with dancing or a flaming geographical drama. In the field of music, it is more enthusiastic. On summer evenings crowds in the parks hear the Municipal Band and the Parks' Orchestra, sometimes with programs of Wagner and Schubert, more often of Victor Herbert and Sousa; and the Chicago Opera Company, when it comes each year, plays to overfilled houses. The guarantors have not yet faced a deficit. But then, of course, opera is fashionable, and the season is one of only three nights.

It would, indeed, be a mistake to think that Baltimore is without men of high intellect and notable attainments. Yet the ferment of art and ideas, like the surge of headlong commercial ambition, is alien. Young men and women find here little stimulus beyond the academic and little chance for recognition. Regularly, they emigrate. Those who remain subscribe more or less meekly to Mr. Mencken's loud and tremendous authority; settle down to a compromise devoid of rigors; or remain "collegiate," mixing their Hemingway with gin. Sometimes from these and their blood brothers of the boosting circle there proceeds a sort of high-jinks spirit, embarrassing to settled Baltimore but a necessary relief from the stolid virtues. These are votaries of the "Free State" terminology and the bad-boy attitude, without ever believing in the importance of either.

The real and everyday Baltimore has the average shrewdness, wise caution and common sense of the average man. It is sober and steady; its streets are clean and quiet; it has some notion of what constitutes a fair municipal government; its crimes are few; its health good; it eschews scandals; its schools, despite underpaid teachers, provide the customary "equipment for life" with some emphasis on vocational preparation. Its soul is summated in its houses and favored movies. It is the soul of a man at home—doubtless a little troubled, a little unhappy in the deep places of his mind—but seeming at peace. That spirit, "sedentary, uneventful and ingloriously safe," is powerful and pervasive. Only occasionally does Baltimore dream divertingly of a strident future, black and humming with machines.

A. D. EMMART and H. KINGSTON FLEMING.

(This is the sixth of a series of articles by various writers discussing interesting American cities.)

With Leslie Howard

Escape, by John Galsworthy. Booth Theater, October 26, 1927.

THE report is that Mr. Galsworthy has announced that "Escape" will be the last play he will write. Whether he said it or not, or will stick to his resolution even if he did say it, is not so important as the fact that this new, and perhaps final, tragedy will serve very well as an instance of the Galsworthy case in modern drama.

Long ago, when "Justice" and "The Silver Box" and "Strife" appeared, the course of the drama in English was closer to Ibsen. It was more serious, or at least took itself and its problem more seriously. These plays of Mr. Galsworthy's turned on social evils; they were concerned with character, to some extent, but mostly with the contradictions and wrongs of our social system and our sins against human nature. They had, too, freshness of feeling, and a certain spontaneity and ease of writing that were a rest after the heavy drought of Ibsen as he came to us through the Archer translations. Moreover, the Galsworthy technical invention and his intellectual rhythm were new and entertaining. And finally, these plays proved to be actable; they were adept, fluent theater, when all was said; and they had a theatrical sense for points; every point came over.

There were many plays later from Mr. Galsworthy's pen, of which "The Skin Game" and "Loyalties" are as striking as any, and the most recent in our memories. In "Loyalties," to take the more impressive of the two, the special Galsworthy quality comes to a head, that peculiar texture of drama and idea that struck some people as very deep, modern and significant, and some people as an absurd assumption of depth and meaning by a play that was, however diverting it may have been, of no importance.

To my mind, the latter point of view is near the

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truth, but not so fair, perhaps, as it might be. Mr. Galsworthy is so well bred with his points, so much the gentleman with his arguments, he sticks to such a luminous cricket, that you could hardly accuse him of absurd assumptions. I myself objected greatly to "Loyalties." I disliked seeing a serious theme superimposed on a play that was, after all, only a facile and entertaining melodrama. I disliked this suggestion of social problem and tragedy in matter that was only, after all, more or less entertaining theatrical fiction. I refused to take "Loyalties" as a significant problem play about race loyalty, Jews, Gentiles and so on. At the time of its production, what with people going on about a great race drama, one could be quite hot on the subject.

But with the passage of time, things grow cooler, not to speak of the forgetfulness common among the kind of people who would think "Loyalties" significant art. And certainly "Escape" ought to ease things down. It begins easily, with leisurely security. Such themes as decency, justice, the law, chance, human cruelty and so on begin to be launched. There is a delicious suspense for a few scenes. Then the drama simmers down to a series of numbers, one-act pieces, variations on the theme of justice and human variety of mind, and ends tragically, but pleasantly so, since we are rewarded with the fine quality exhibited by the hero. But the simple souls who could think this a deep social drama must indeed be few, however many may find it, as I did, a delightful evening's entertainment. We may try to say quietly, then, what is Galsworthy's relation to serious drama, to life and to—what his admirers claim for him—modern ideas.

Galsworthy's relation to the theater is obvious. A nose for material, a dialogue sense, actable and varied characters, a journalistic instinct for an appealing slant in the treatment all through, and last, but not least, a texture that is never consistent for any length of time, but is obliging and amiable, willing to please and divert, to touch deep and quivering nerves, to attack and sting, and the next moment to be humorous, suave, playful, even arch. He contrives scenes that actors can carry to great heights, and that is a good deal to contrive; but the text itself, looked sharply into, is rarely much beyond talented facility and expert novelism.

The implications of "Escape"—of "Loyalties," too, for that matter—which assumes these depths, are no more profound than the implications of "Interference," which assumes nothing beyond an evening's melodrama entertainment. The thing to say is that Mr. Galsworthy's dramatic writing has used modern philosophic, social and esthetic ideas as a part of its substance and device, exactly as some other plays may have used the triangle situation, the screen, self-sacrifice, 100 percent Americanism, cut-backs, twin beds and so on. Mr. Galsworthy, then, has used these ideas and problems and materials; the depth, however, of their entrance into any absolute or final dramatic creation is another matter. That, however, does not at all lessen his claims as one of the most skillful and entertaining figures in our modern theater.

"Escape" tells the story of a young man, with money, university training and a war record, who, by way of protecting a street walker in the park, has a fight with a plain-clothes man, knocks him down and finds him dead from a fall against the iron railing. He stays over the body, is arrested for murder, given a five-years' sentence. After two years of hell, he escapes. He is protected by some of the people he meets, evaded by some, chased by others, and we end with a young vicar, quite Galsworthily undecided about his religious conscience in modern life, et cetera, who is about to tell a lie, perhaps, to save the fugitive, when the fugitive steps out, unwilling to accept the sacrifice, and so is betrayed at last by what we cannot escape, our own decency. As you think about the play at this point, you may find yourself getting a little hot all over again at such tampering with deep and ominous themes out of human character and modern social life. But you must control yourself and let it all pass as amiable theatrical diversion, pleasantly reminiscent of great matter.

Miss Frieda Inescort, as the young married woman who is the first encounter for the convict in his flight from his pursuers, plays charmingly. Mr. Leslie Howard comes off with such a performance as amounts to a triumph. It is beautifully felt and beautifully projected all through. The taste and technical certainty that we see now is that already seen in Mr. Howard's playing, but the feeling goes farther, the sense of fineness is richer and more pathetic. He carries the play a long way ahead of itself.

Mr. Winthrop Ames' direction of "Escape" is wholly in the right key throughout the scenes, and quite impeccable.

STARK YOUNG.

This Nation

Muses and fetishes, particular
And patronizing gods, myths and those men
That to past darkness have been many a star,
Seeing how our encumbered regimen
Has all our pride and heart, have given a wide
Berth to the corners of our chosen field
And left us to our busy heart and pride,
Left us the frenzy which we chose for shield.
Stretch out no arms, look with no sorry eyes
Into their world, we being given to this.
Black steel, piled stone and the rigidities
That keep you safe your mouth should sweeten to kiss.
This nation is a sea bird that, still-born
Into the violence of a rising sea,
Seems to be flying, so are the wings torn
By winds though no bird's power shakes them free.
One bitter feather fastened in the breast,
That were no feather were it not that bird's,
May ride no higher than the last wave's crest,
Water its element, mere wind its words.
It will not matter, for the feather's quill
Fast in the water-shackled flesh could find
Passion and strength in nothing but that chill
Bosom under those eyes that were born blind.

RAYMOND HOLDEN.

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Mr. Nathan and the Movies

IN the September issue of the American Mercury, George Jean Nathan has written six pages of "Notes on the Movies"; they are important, but not exactly in the way Mr. Nathan may think they are. He is, it goes without saying, much more intelligent than most critics and most manufacturers of the movies; but it is disheartening to find that a man of Nathan's wit and discrimination should think it worth-while to announce the oldest critical platitudes about the movies and, in dealing with principles, should have arrived in 1927 at a point which every thoughtful observer of the screen left behind ten years ago and which I myself had to give up at least as long ago as last August.

First in Mr. Nathan's notes is his attack on the pretext of censorship, summed up in his final sentence: "The circumstance that the censors have stolen some small coins out of their purse can't conceal the fact that that purse betrays an unmistakable resemblance to a sow's ear." Correct. In actual practice, the censors have probably improved as many films as they have spoiled; the objection to censorship is untouched by this circumstance.

Second: that the business end of the movies should be separated from the producing end. Correct.

I reserve the next three points for the end, because they are significant.

Sixth: Presentations. Three years ago, when presentations began to be terribly elaborate, movie-lovers protested, ineffectively. The presentations have grown worse, until now they stand simply as a confession of defeat on the part of the movie-makers or theater-owners. For weeks in succession, Roxy's theater has advertised everything from the prologue to the ushers, with the name of the picture in small type; it was not until "What Price Glory?" moved in that the film was put in first place. The profits from the movie houses, in the long run, are so great that they can afford to pay Whiteman and Gilda Gray fabulous sums to appear for short or long periods. The presentations are, when they lack such attractions, unholy bores; most of them are, nevertheless, as good as the pictures which follow.

(Seventh point reserved). Eighth: "It is a trivial point, and one beneath the dignity of an old professor, but I should like to inquire why those who have wondered over the pull of the movies and the audiences they have drawn from the theater haven't noticed how very much better-looking the girls are than those on the stage." The old M. Nathan, always leering from behind the mask! I should like to inquire whether he has ever noticed the occult fact, here revealed for the first time, that the camera often makes people look lovelier than they are.

Ninth: playwrights as scenarists: "Of all the playwrights . . . only one, Stallings, has shown the slightest sign of appreciating the difference between the screen and the stage." Correct in principle, if not numerically. I can think of no other.

Tenth: the uniformity system. In the theater there are divisions: star companies, road companies, stock companies, second-year companies, and so on; vaudeville and burlesque have their gradations; there are art theaters, small and big; but movies "must all be fashioned with a single type of audience in mind, and that type the lowest." Mr. Nathan notes the beginnings of a little-theater movement in the movies; even the less competent critics for the New York dailies have observed the fact that nearly all of these judge art in the movies by the foreign label, by dreariness or daring of theme, and that, with exceptions, they have presented pretty bad movies—cinematically speaking. Further point: except for the happy ending which may be banished in some cases by esthetic canons, there is nothing in a supremely good movie to make it unpalatable to the people who now admire supremely bad ones. "The Last Laugh" had a substantial run in New York; Chaplin has never been exactly a flop; "The Birth of a Nation" made millions for various people; "Metropolis" ran as long as "Sunya." An intelligent outlook on life, a feeling for tragedy, a refusal to truckle to sentimentality, may imperil a picture. But I undertake to make a pretty good picture out of "The Queen of the Cossacks."

And now to the major points. "The moving pictures, I need not say"—says Mr. Nathan, and one wishes that he hadn't said it—"are simply pantomime with a *compère* in the form of printed titles." The moving pictures are nothing of the sort. *Pantomime* is pantomime; pantomime is also part of the player's equipment before the camera. The moving pictures are sequences of scenes in which pantomime plays a part. It is long since I have seen Rin-tin-tin, but as I recall, his pictures were above the average; the ride of the Klansmen was good moving picture and was about as pantomimic as the page of type you are now reading. There is as much pantomime in "Chang" (a few shots excepted) as there is in the Mississippi River. Mr. Nathan is under the thrall of Chaplin—a very good thing to be—and Chaplin is a superb mime, but he does not depend entirely on his gift. He uses it again and again to sharpen his point, or to broaden it, as he requires. If the movie were pantomime, then it would only be a question of begetting sufficient skill in that art to reproduce any stage play. But Mr. Nathan, correctly, and five years behind all the other good critics of the movie, warns against close relations with the stage.

"The present system . . . is to take the movie story away from the expert pantomimists and give it to the camera, in other words, to convert the camera into a dramatist." Mr. Nathan protests. But it is a sign of progress in the movies to take the *movie* (hang the story!) away from the pantomimists; and the intention is not to make the camera a dramatist, but to make it—something for which I lack a name—say, cinetist—a maker of movies. "You can photograph pantomime and you can, further, photograph drama in so far as it is pantomime, but you can't photograph drama of any other kind, that is, and persuade anyone but a half-wit. You can't photograph, with the greatest camera ever invented, metaphysical drama, or the drama that lies in luscious, beautiful, moon-struck words, or the drama of wit, or the drama that emerges from the conflict of ideas." The misleading word in all this is "photograph"; so long as Mr. Nathan sees nothing in the movies but photography, he is too myopic to be a serious critic. But before going into that, I suggest to Mr. Nathan that he go to see a very old film, "Cabiria," in which a master of

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luscious, beautiful, moon-struck words collaborated. He will see there that no effort has been made to *photograph* the drama that lies in words, but that an extremely successful effort (as it seemed to me many years ago) was made to create, in another medium, something of the same effect created by the spoken words on the stage. With the simplest camera ever made, I will undertake to create the counterpart of the drama of wit—but only the counterpart. To create drama, by photography or otherwise, is no part of the function of the movie.

The business of the movie, says Nathan, is "to be absolutely realistic where the stage is artificial and . . . on occasion artificial where the stage is sadly realistic." The business of the movie is nothing of the kind. It is to create a picture conforming to its own laws, limitations, and requirements. It may need at times to be realistic—and considering that it can be, infinitely more so than the stage, the novel, or any other form of art, it ought to exploit its special character. But until it develops style (which means that the realistic and the artificial will both be molded to a general conception underlying the specific scene, reel, or film) it will not be worth considering as a work of art. The movie can tell the story of a violent action better than any other medium, let us say; some movies ought to do this, always. But this does not mean that the movie is committed to violence. It happens that the movie is also a prime instrument for the projection of fantasy; and tricks; and scenic investiture; and farce; and, regrettably, the movie seems to have become the favorite means of communicating jokes to people—printed jokes carefully collected by the Literary Digest. But no single one of these things exhausts the movie's possibilities.

"The movie as we see it by and large at the present time is simply a stage play, its unities corrupted, stripped of its words, and made to show all the scenes . . . that the dramatist has . . . succeeded . . . in keeping off the stage." Correct. But the cure for this ill is not to reduce the movie to photographing pantomime or photographing any other single thing. Effective scenes in the movies are those in which one recognizes a rhythm and senses a style; and great movies will be made when directors, having developed a style of their own, are left free to put into their movies whatever is appropriate to them of intelligence and beauty. This happy state will not come so long as people otherwise intelligent and capable of making distinctions continue to think of the camera merely as a photographic instrument. In the hands of the good director, it is an instrument of creation. If it is necessary for him to make his people seem midgets, he can place his camera in an aeroplane; if he wants them to appear to be standing on their heads, the camera obliges. And particularly the camera is his servant in creating the greater illusion, of an existence different from our own, yet conceivable because it seems to live by its perfect laws. It needs to be set free, not from its own limitations, but from the limitations of other arts.

GILBERT SELDES.

CORRESPONDENCE

Questions for Liberals

SIR: Your provocative editorial entitled, significantly, "Dictating to the Future," is, we believe, the first frank utterance on the part of the New Republic in relation to the most momentous question in the contemporary world, to wit, the realistic relation between the logic of class struggle and the logic of patriotic nationalism.

We wish to invite your thoughtful consideration (and therefore that of American liberals in general) to the following crucial questions, which are stated in question form because that is the simplest way of condensing a vast amount of material into brief compass.

Will you, therefore, kindly make an important contribution to general clarification by printing, and if possible, commenting, upon these fundamental queries:

1. Why can the liberal accept nationalist war, why can he not accept class struggle?

2. What precisely does the phrase "conditional class struggle" mean?

3. Is the liberal opposed to violence? Kindly cite instances from the Great War.

4. Which social class does the liberal feel himself a member of: the bourgeoisie or the proletariat?

5. If the "facts of contemporary American life" do not reveal class struggle, what *do* they reveal?

6. Will you concede that there is in these United States a plutocratic control of all our institutions?

7. How do you explain away the fact that the most liberal government in the world conducted itself in the Great War most illiberally?

8. Since the most liberal journal (of opinion) in America not only boasted of "having willed the War" but also gladly accepted conscription, coercion, force, murder, as legitimate methods of vindicating its liberal philosophy, can you help us to understand in what sincere and realistic sense liberalism can be said to be liberal?

9. If it is reasonably true, as a matter of economic determinism, that the financial imperialisms perpetrate behavior that ever threatens to precipitate war, what method, in your opinion, is more intelligent, more efficacious, more moral, than the revolutionary determination on the part of the victimized class (the proletariat) to oppose capitalist war with the only powerful weapon at their disposal, *viz.*, class war?

10. If humble men in droves of millions *must* die, is it not more intelligent (and infinitely more spiritual!) to teach them to sacrifice their lives for a cause that is clearly their own, namely, the preservation and perpetuation of their own class?

11. Is not the moral equivalent of war, social revolution—under capitalist imperialism?

12. If you were a self-conscious proletarian, instead of being a middle-class journalist, would it not be suicidal to believe in liberalism?

13. Is not liberalism, speaking psychoanalytically, a subtle method of evading the harsh determinisms of our socially stratified, capitalistic civilization?

14. Will you explain a little more definitely and lucidly what you mean by your definition of liberalism as "an attitude toward human fulfillment which keeps genuine possibilities open"? Open for whom?

You will be contributing significantly to the much-needed clarification of liberal and radical doctrine by printing these inquiries. Editorial comment will, of course, be welcome.

SAMUEL D. SCHMALHAUSEN,
V. F. CALVERTON,
WALTER LANE,
Editors "The Modern Quarterly."

Baltimore, Maryland.

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The Catholics in Mexico

SIR: In your issue of October 28, you make the following categorical statement, speaking of the "revolt" of Generals Serrano and Gomez in Mexico: "The same forces undoubtedly backed Gomez and Serrano that once backed the dictator, Diaz: the Catholic Church, the landlords and, in all probability, the foreign capitalists." In the absence from the country of Bishop Diaz, spokesman for the Mexican Episcopate, I wish, in his place, to deny the truth of that statement, as far as it refers to the Catholic Church, in the most unqualified manner. It was made without a single shred of evidence, in the face of repeated and recent denials by the Mexican bishops, who are gentlemen, and it is denied by your own correspondent in Mexico, Carleton Beals, in the very issue in which your own reckless accusation appeared. It is true that Gomez made an open bid for Catholic support in his campaign speeches, but he and Serrano were bluntly and somewhat scornfully rebuffed, as only less acceptable to Catholics than Calles and Obregon. The Catholic Church had no part whatever in the alleged revolt of the two late candidates for the presidency in Mexico, nor in the campaign which preceded.

WILFRID PARSONS, S. J.,
Editor of "America."

New York City.

[Our statement was incorrect, in that we said "Catholic Church" when we should have said simply, "the Catholics." The Church in Mexico would not, of course, openly and formally espouse the cause of any revolution, least of all when the issue was in doubt. But the Serrano-Gomez revolt was unquestionably on behalf of the Catholics, the landlords, and foreign capitalists; individuals in the first two classes undoubtedly supported it, as individuals, secretly or openly; and its failure will be a bitter blow to their hopes. These are the facts we had in mind.

The passage in Mr. Beals' article to which Father Parsons refers is probably the following:

> These initial reverses disheartened sympathetic militarists. The Church and "Artichoke" parties did not prove too willing to embrace a candidate [Hector Almada] who yesterday stood in the enemy's camp.

Mr. Beals' article also contained, however, the following passages:

> It [the revolt] appealed to fully 70 percent of the army, it could scarcely fail to please the recalcitrant petroleum companies, it might have fanned the smoldering Catholic animosity against President Calles into open flame.
>
> . . . For more than seven years this [the Calles] regime has faced treachery within and the menace of intervention from without. Slowly, surely, it has cut power away from the land-holders, the Church, the old-time bureaucrats.
>
> . . . The second result of the present *fracaso* of the anti-reëlectionists is the definite removal of the menace, for many years to come, of an armed movement sponsored by, or seeking aid from, the Diaz landed proprietors, the Church or unruly foreign capital.

These observations, we submit, support the statement to which Father Parsons objects, in the sense in which it was intended. —THE EDITORS.]

The Seven Seals of Science

SIR: It is a curious psychological phenomenon that, if we approach a book with a definite prejudice against the facts contained therein, we read with unseeing eyes; thus we come away the more confirmed in our prejudice, or else suddenly awaken at the end with what we conceive is a "new idea," which seems to arise spontaneously from our cerebrations, when the idea is nothing more nor less than an epitome of the central theme of the book itself. Such is, apparently, the way your reviewer read my "Seven Seals of Science," to judge from some of the statements made in the review published in the New Republic of August 3.

Your reviewer quotes from my book a statement to the effect that the sciences have developed in a definite order or sequence, apparently viewing this statement with skepticism, in one paragraph, and accepting it as a fact in the next. He then accuses me of not indicating the *why* of this generalization, and suggests as his own "contribution" that "the order of the unfolding of our sciences is technological." Now that is precisely what I have gone to great pains to explain in my book; namely, that mathematics developed before astronomy, both of these before physics, the three of them before chemistry, all these physical sciences before geology and biology, and biology before psychology, *for the reason* that the technological principles and devices of the more basic sciences had to be perfected, at least in part, before the next science in the sequence could perfect its own technique and build for itself a verifiable body of truth.

I could cite scores of references from the book to demonstrate that the matter of the *why* is my chief concern throughout, but shall confine myself to the following: page 224 regarding mathematics; 265 *re* astronomy; 134 *re* physics; 165 *re* chemistry; 179 *re* geology; 312 and 329 *re* biology; and 105, 106, and 355 *re* psychology.

In the light of these citations and many similar ones that might be given, bearing on the question of *why* the chronological unfolding of the sciences is a fact, I leave it for any candid reader to explain the following comment on the part of your reviewer: "Now it seems to me that even a small child presented with this 'fact' would inquire, 'Why?' With what does this order correlate? Not only does Professor Mayer never say (!); apparently it never occurred to him to wonder (!) . . . If I may be allowed to make what seems to me a very obvious suggestion, it is that the order of the unfolding of our sciences is technological."

The most charitable explanation I can find is the one with which I open this letter.

Elaborating upon what your reviewer conceives to be a new idea with him, he says: "The leaning tower of Pisa is a simpler instrument than the compound microscope. Thus certain elements of physics preceded all of histology. If the interferometer is still more complex than the compound microscope, that only proves, I think, that physics was not wholly unsealed by Newton nor astronomy by Galileo."

With all this I, of course, agree fully. It is the central theme of my book.

JOSEPH MAYER.

Tufts College, Massachusetts.

SIR: Professor Mayer's present statement of the intent of his "Seven Seals of Science" comes to me with the shock of complete surprise. There is nothing like it in the book, where—for example, in his preface—he states his purpose in quite other terms. I have gone over the passages here cited with the greatest interest, but I am obliged to report that they strike me as conventional and perfunctory. Surveyed in relation to the whole book, the recognition which they give to the importance of technology for science impresses me as far from adequate.

C. E. AYRES.

Hondale, New Mexico.

A Motive for Prohibition

SIR: In a recent editorial you assign two motives for passing laws forbidding the use of certain articles—the belief that they harm the user, and the desire to enforce certain moral or esthetic standards. In the case of intoxicants there is a third motive—the protection of the community. There is a widespread belief that prohibition, even when not well enforced, greatly restricts drunkenness. This belief, whether well or ill founded, introduces the third consideration mentioned above. Moderate use of alcohol, if it hurts the user, hurts him alone. The same cannot be said of drunkenness, which is a peril and an injury to the entire community scarcely to be exaggerated.

M. E. CASE.

Oberlin, Ohio.

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Science, Folk-lore and Control of Folk-ways

Science: The False Messiah, by C. E. Ayres. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. 320 pages. $3.

SINCE this book can hardly be reviewed without mentioning its provocative character, I shall say at the outset that the book is a highly provoking one. To traditionalists, whether they be such in science or in religion, the provocation will take the form of irritation, but, I fancy, of an irritation which will find little public expression. Silence is the part of discretion; both because all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot put together the Humpty-Dumptys of cultured superstition which Mr. Ayres has so genially dropped from off their wall of high prestige, and because public notice might call the attention of others to the smash of idols. But in those not hopelessly committed, the book will awaken searchings of heart and mind. Rarely in one book have so many glittering bubbles been so deftly and, in style, so delightfully pricked. Indeed, at times the brilliance and wit of form almost conceal the solidity of substance underneath.

For Mr. Ayres knows his stuff, as the saying goes; and his stuff is philosophy, anthropology and current sociological theorizing. Two ideas borrowed from anthropology dominate the presentation. Civilization consists of folk-lore and folk-ways. This is as true now as it ever was. The notion that we have now, in principle at least, outgrown folk-lore, and have institutions and constitutions instead of folk-ways, is a fantasy. Only content has changed. Customary ways of belief and behavior remain, the one believed and the other practised by the mass of people simply because they are customary, while gathering to themselves the glamor and idealized authority which enable customs to be first endured and then cherished. As far as humanity at large is concerned, the attitude toward science is the same as the earlier attitude toward that which enlightened persons now regard as mythology and magic:

> Oh, let us never, never doubt
> What no one can be sure about.

This statement does not mean that science does not have its own solid basis and claims—among practitioners of science. But as Mr. Ayres remarks, they were men before they were scientists. When they come out of the laboratory and observatory, they frequently leave their physical apparatus and mechanical appliances behind them, mentally as well as bodily. They then treat science as a revelation, and, like all revelations, as offering a gospel of salvation for the ills of mankind. Science then becomes for them, as well as for the passive populace, a body of folk-lore. In reality, the history of science is the history of the invention and use of machines and of a technique, as marvelous as it is elaborate, for employing tools. The machine is the reality of science; theoretical interpretation may or may not be true; in the end, the answer is read in some machine more delicate, precise and more skilfully used than the machine which furnished the material on which other theories were based. The verifiability of scientific conclusions signifies that they do not stand alone. They are made possible by machines, and anyone who operates the machines in a designated way will get like results.

But science ends as well as begins in machines. Machine technology and industrial civilization are the significant products of science. These products determine the folk-ways of the civilization in which we live. Whatever the resistance of old folk-ways to invention and new methods, the lure of the tool is finally compelling. Some immediate utility draws men to its adoption. Beliefs, traditions, ideals, meet almost insuperable direct barriers to diffusion among alien cultures. Technical material traits find easier acceptance, and do so largely under the illusion that they will merely serve some directly felt need, leaving other things, especially the cherished body of folk-ways and lore, intact. Ulterior results are wholly unexpected; men lived for a long time in the new industrial era, with all its political and intellectual alterations, without suspecting that anything had occurred except an improvement in methods of spinning and weaving—just as many people still seem to suppose that the railway and motor-car portend only easier and more rapid locomotion, and regard those who call attention to certain other effects as dangerous radicals instigated by some sinister personal motive. Or, beyond the immediate utility, the invention is celebrated as a theme for hymns to progress. In reality, eventual changes in folk-ways are so extensive that, if men had realized them at the outset, they would have seemed so devastating that cursing and destruction would have been their lot.

The new consequences in which science, itself born of respect for machines as ultimate arbiters of truth about nature, bore fruit are commonly termed the industrial revolution. But as it is the nature of science to breed new science, so it is the nature of machinery to generate new forms of machinery. It is a recurrence of the old illusion of the eternal stability of what is customary that makes us regard the present era as stable; we are in the first act of the drama, not at its climax; it may be doubted whether the industrial revolution has begun. Anyway, it has not, as yet, begun to have its way with us, for our institutions, and largely, our beliefs, are still medieval. The result is a hybrid; our present civilization is marked by an internal conflict greater than any experienced in any culture of the past. The forces which control our folk-ways are at odds with those which regulate our folk-lore, and with the conditions under which folk-ways operate. We live in a period of dissolution.

Such is the groundwork of the book, too summarily stated. The rest is a diagnosis, without much prognosis, of the resulting state of science and philosophy, of intellectual and "spiritual" life. "The onset of mechanical civilization is the great divide. It is not a meander in the rivers of civilized life. It is another watershed." "Machinery begins by altering the day's routine and ends by altering the cosmos." Such a pervasive and irresistible influence cannot be quarantined; it cannot be kept isolated in a realm of business and commerce which does not touch the rest of life. Mr. Ayres is especially concerned to point out its bearing upon the state of men's beliefs, and especially upon the idea of science as the authentic fountain-head of truth. For if "science" is ready to take credit for improvements and progress, it is also subject to blame not only as the author of the flagrant evils of our industrial life, but even more of the undermining of the ideas and ideals which are the intellectual framework of our traditional religion, morals and politics.

The limits of a review do not permit me to trace in any detail the features of Mr. Ayres' diagnosis. It must suffice to say that he indicates two stages, in the first of

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which science was "meek and mild," presenting apologies, being concerned to show that its methods and conclusions were safe because in harmony with at least the essential spirit of traditional folk-lore; while in the latter stage it tends to "take command," and be presented as the agency of a steady and systematic progress of humanity by means of a control of nature and society, through knowledge of the truth. With respect to the first point, I confine myself to saying that I am not acquainted with any other account so searching and convincing of the ingenious, but not ingenuous, devices by which it has been sought to sustain an old system of beliefs in the face of methods and results utterly inconsistent with it. He applies his analysis to the intellectual insincerities and roundabout circuits of classic philosophers, as well as to the spiritual message and gospel said to be contained in the new scientific revelation. As for its promise of conducting mankind through the wilderness into the promised land, he points out that "science, if we overlook its importance for machine technology," so far consists of an elaborate apparatus for the display of intellectual curiosities, ending in conclusions which are indeed marvelous in precision and sweep, but yet inherently, for the mass of men, just curiosities. This is the aspect of mere folk-lore. The mysteries can be approached only by initiated adepts, and are accepted by the mass on authority, and because of the prestige of custom and fashion —a glamor which attaches equally to pseudo-science and which gives the latter even greater influence. Meanwhile the fundamental thing is that science delivers only means, instruments. It does not tell men for what ends the means should be used; toward aims and purposes, science maintains benevolent neutrality. "If we want to attain certain ends, science has nothing to say against it, and may be able to provide a vehicle." But social control, if it means anything, means control of the desires and purposes which move men to act—and with respect to them, science is not the driver who holds the reins; it is rather an accidental passenger.

A strictly just evaluation of the net worth of Mr. Ayres' brilliant discussion and penetrating analysis is not easy. For certain of his conclusions appear to be incidental, implied in the tone of his discussion. This is especially true of what seems its pessimistic strain. As an antidote to that easy optimism and supine complacency which is a marked trait of the present time (probably as a compensation, as a protection from realization of ills before which we are still impotent), his pages are well-nigh unrivalled. I do not see how any thoughtful person can demur to his main propositions. He says what is both true and needful to say in his criticisms; he seems to me profoundly correct in his statement of the nature of science, in its relation to tools and as itself a tool. It is well to acknowledge that science can "provide instruments of bringing about various effects never dreamed of before in the history of man. But to determine what had better happen or to oblige us to bring about salubrious effects, science is completely impotent." He is surely right in his perception that future history will be similar to past history: "one long uninterrupted series of crises and problems giving way to more problems and crises to be followed by further problems and crises." The notion of any "control" that will give automatic assurance against the recurrence of crises and problems, or that will provide automatic means for their resolution, is the idlest of fantasies. Each stage of human change, even of betterment, will bring with it, on its own level, its own evils and difficulties; of that fact there can be no doubt.

Yet there are certain considerations, which Mr. Ayres passes over lightly, that must yet be taken into account in a complete reckoning. That the civilization of any period will always be an affair of folk-lore and folk-ways is true enough; it is even truistic. From it, however, as from many truisms, important consequences follow, and these consequences Mr. Ayres has brilliantly exhibited in uncovering the source and nature of many current illusions. But there seems to be also an undercurrent of disparagement of any achievement and trait of civilization just because it will be a phase of folk-lore or of folk-ways. Put so baldly, Mr. Ayres can justly deny holding any such view. But I do not find explicit recognition of the fact that the existence of folk-lore and folk-ways is consistent with an enormous difference in their quality; of the fact that even crises and problems are so affected by this difference that it is better to have them on one level than to be without them on some other plateau. And especially he seems to overlook the possibility that, when all is said and done, that which we must still call scientific *method* may affect the quality of future folk-lore. That, in detail, "science" signifies a highly technical apparatus, esoteric to the mass, is true enough. But there are generic attitudes, like those of facing facts, of analysis, of experimentation, of receiving conclusions hypothetically, which are radically opposed to the dispositions which have supported the folk-lore of the past. It is no easy task to incorporate these newer dispositions in the customary habits of thought and belief. Mr. Ayres supplies plenty of evidence that many scientists fail in so doing, the moment they touch matters of morals, religion and politics. But any implication that the task is hopeless implies an estimate of human nature which paralyzes human effort. Not only hope springs eternal in the human breast, but effort as well. That intelligence, the intelligence represented in scientific method, be incarnated in the ever-renewed springs of human desire and energy, is after all, the problem and crisis of present civilization.

It is true that science supplies instruments, and not the purposes and policies which rule action, and which root in the depths of desire. But the attitudes and general habits which mark scientific method may themselves become an increasingly intense object of desire on the part of an expanding public. And since desire and thought do not dwell apart in non-communicating compartments, the growth of intelligent habits will radiate and affect all other desires. When one considers how the "idealistic" desires of man have, in the past, been drafted into channels the issue of which was, in the end, confusion and error; how the ardent efforts of men have been frustrated by the irrelevance to actual conditions of ends proposed, and all because desire and purpose have been framed in terms aloof from all actual and possible instrumentalities, I find it impossible to believe that science, as the purveyor of instruments, and desire, as the well-spring of aims and ideals, are as insulated and non-interacting as the tenor of Mr. Ayres' discussion seems to imply. Hence I venture to think that Mr. Ayres' searching and convincing criticisms do not plot a new road to a new kind of ivory tower, but state the urgent problem of present civilization in a way which, to those who understand, will be a stimulant and a directive in effort, a clarifier and a purge of desire and purpose.

JOHN DEWEY.

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Lessons in Politics

"Boss" Tweed. The Story of a Grim Generation, by Denis Tilden Lynch. New York: Boni and Liveright. 433 pages. $4.

MR. LYNCH has given us the story of the generation rather than of the man who was only in part and by accident the representative of it. His book is, in effect, the political history of the city of New York from 1850 to 1875. That history is chiefly one of crime, the details of which the author has assiduously collected from contemporary sources, including newspapers; and reveals in a style of brassy luster. The hero is useful as a title and a rhetorical device for giving some slight coherence to the chronicle. In his own biography he makes only an occasional appearance. As the wheel revolves, Tweed comes into view, nearer to the tire than to the axle. That he was the captain and director of the system seems a matter of position rather than of character. His biographer, so amply furnished with the external records of the time, lacks altogether the personal documents which would reveal Tweed as he appeared to himself or to those about him. If he had a secret, Mr. Lynch has not divined it.

Beginning life in the third generation of industrious Scotch immigrants, Tweed joined his father in the manufacture of chairs, and his father-in-law in that of brushes, on the East Side of New York. His introduction to public office came through his organization of a volunteer fire company, the Americus Big Six, which he led in triumph on visits to other cities. As Sachem of Tammany Hall, he became acquainted with the human composition of the segment of democracy which he was to rule, at a time when the Native American or Know Nothing party was putting an accent on racial differences. This issue was of far greater moment in New York of the fifties than the slavery question. As Alderman and State Senator he gained an intimate knowledge of the machinery of government, which he made a personal appanage. The rest was easy, almost too easy to believe, if we are limited to Mr. Lynch's ingenuous record. His advance in crime from petty graft to the theft of millions, his ostentatious philanthropy, his bilking of the reformers, his luxury and licentiousness, his fall like Belshazzar's in the midst of his glory, his slow strangling to death in the coils of the courts which he had dominated, his repentance and edifying end in prison, with his childish faith in the guardian angels flaming high—all this makes as typical and commonplace a hero of a morality as Bunyan's Mr. Badman.

The lesson of Tweed's career is not in his own character but in the society of which he was a part; and the lesson is still unlearned. Mr. Lynch gives an exact and exhaustive account of the progress of political crime in New York City, from the sale of franchises for street railways by the Aldermen to the padding of all expense accounts of the city with 50 to 500 percent of graft for the Ring and their underlings, by which process the city paid $12,000,000 for a courthouse which should have cost $3,000,000, and additional sums for furnishing and repairs, of which J. H. Ingersoll collected $5,691,144.56 for furniture, A. J. Garvey, $646,516.56, for "repairs to plaster" ($138,187 of which was for two days' work), and John H. Keyser, $1,149,874.50 for repairing plumbing. These payments were made to business, and business kept Tweed in power. When in 1870 the accounts of Connolly, the Comptroller, were opened to a committee of six citizens, among whom were John Jacob Astor, Chairman, Moses Taylor and Marshall O. Roberts, the committee certified that "the financial affairs of the city under the charge of the Comptroller are administered in a correct and faithful manner." This report, made public on November 7, the day before election, resulted in Tweed's greatest triumph at the polls. "The slightest examination of the records," says Mr. Lynch, "would have disclosed the payment of more than $15,000,000 in fraudulent claims in the first few months of the year." The state of mind of the people of New York in the seventies was not different from that of the people of the United States today, who decline to learn what fantastic contracts with enormous profits to business were made by the War Department in 1917 and 1918.

Another phase of the lesson is to be studied in the relations of Tweed to the reformers. In 1857 a new form of government was imposed on the city by the legislature controlled by the new Republican party, which vested power in the hands of a Board of Supervisors, consisting of six Republicans and six Democrats. It was believed that each party would watch the other and prevent stealing. This, says Mr. Lynch, "marked the beginning of Tweed's real rise to power." He could always control at least one or two of his opponents by the simple device of letting them in on the spoils. This arrangement was, however, merely the outer court of Tweed's great temple of graft. That was dedicated in 1870, when the new charter placed financial power in the Board of Audit, consisting of the Mayor, the Comptroller and the Commissioner of Public Works. Strange as it may seem, the reformers, headed by Peter Cooper, walked innocently into this trap, and such members of the Citizens' Association as Moses Taylor, H. M. Claflin, C. L. Tiffany and Andrew Gilsey forwarded to Tweed "an unqualified endorsement of the charter" to be used in getting the bill passed by the legislature—a result which was in fact secured by a fund of $600,000, furnished by Jay Gould, Jim Fisk and other practical business men. Tweed's record in the Board of Supervisors was a matter of common knowledge, but the reformers naïvely thought that the Ring was surfeited with riches, and had become honest from sheer weariness—an argument which is not unfamiliar today.

More specifically informing is the account which Mr. Lynch gives, backed by ample citations, of the attitude of the press. For a time Tweed had a representative or ally in the councils of each of the great metropolitan dailies, except the Tribune. Horace Greeley did not, however, lead the crusade. Nor did the Evening Post, of which the proprietor, William Cullen Bryant, dismissed his managing editor, Charles Nordhoff, for assailing Tweed. Harper's Weekly, with its militant cartoonist, Thomas Nash, began the attack. A powerful ally appeared in the Times. One of the directors of this paper was James B. Taylor, Tweed's partner in the New York Printing Company, which in two and a half years received most of the $7,168,212.23 appropriated for public advertising and printing. In 1870 the death of this gentleman left the publisher of the Times, George Jones, and his editorial writer, Louis J. Jennings, free to initiate the campaign which they had long been preparing. At first, they had only general knowledge to go upon. Their onslaught began with an innocent question. "We should like to have a treatise from Mr. Tweed in the art of growing rich. . . . How is it done?" It was the snowball

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which started the avalanche. Tweed and the Ring were due for a fall. Jealousy and cowardice within their own ranks betrayed them. But when, with proofs in hand, the Times returned to the attack, except for the Tribune, the other journals were not permitted by their business interests to join it. The World accused the Times of "a reckless attempt to shake and undermine the city credit, block the wheels of municipal machinery, and introduce a reign of anarchy." The Herald and the Sun remained firm defenders of the boss. Jones refused a bribe of $5,000,000 to refrain from publishing his documents, and Nash, $500,000 to quit his job and go abroad.

On the whole, in regard to high-spirited business men, reformers and journalists, Mr. Lynch leaves us rather cynical. Even for superior politicians, sometimes called statesmen, he excites no enthusiasm. The chief credit for the political direction of the movement against Tweed has been given to Samuel J. Tilden, who drew upon it to win the governorship of New York in 1874 and almost the presidency in 1876. Mr. Lynch shows that Tilden reserved his attack, and meanwhile profited from Tweed's election frauds, until the moment when success against the Ring had been assured by others and when the move was most favorable to his own political fortunes. Moreover, he halted the investigation lest it should blight them. When Tweed, beaten, sick and a prisoner, offered to tell the whole story on condition that he should be set at liberty, Tilden refused. The publication of the complete list of persons having dealings with the city, and the amounts paid them by the Ring, had been promised. The promise was not kept. "Too many good people would be shown as participants in the wholesale looting of the taxpayers." And thus the curtain was rung down upon the final act of the drama with the most important lesson untaught. This was a device of statesmanship. When Tweed at the entrance of the penitentiary was asked his occupation, he answered scornfully, "Statesman."

ROBERT MORSS LOVETT.

"A Deal of Ruined Life"

The Romance of Villon, by Francis Carco, translated by Hamish Miles. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 348 pages. $5.

"LORD, what a deal of ruined life it takes to make a little art!" These words, which Mr. Cabell once put into the mouth of his fictional Shakespeare, can be pertinently applied to the biography of France's fifteenth-century poet which M. Carco has presented under the title of "The Romance of Villon," and which might have been more aptly called something like "The Brutal Tragedy of Villon." For the author, instead of romanticizing in the rosy colors of legend, has gone to the authenticated facts, and portrayed in stark red and black a most depressing portrait of a spoiled and tortured life. Villon, shed of his musical-comedy glamor, is revealed as a poetic rebel futilely struggling against his environment and tormented by a devilishly restive nature which goads him into committing the wild deeds that lead him twice to the edge of the gibbet.

The story begins with François de Montcorbier as a penniless scholar of seventeen, "insignificant, dark, and mischievous-looking," who is living with his priest-uncle, rather starved of his natural weakness for loving and being loved, for being rocked and petted, and bored with the long, empty, and insufferable days. Into his dull life came the once elegant Regnier de Montigny and the disreputable Colin, son of a locksmith, and these two began the boy's education in the vicious ways of the world. At the end of the first month of their acquaintance, the lad had learned to make women pay *him* for his amorous attentions, and he had caught the trick of picking a lock with a hook.

Not sparing the most sordid details, M. Carco unfolds the miserable history vividly and credibly. The reader, dizzy with the wine fumes and often sick with disgust, weaves about the pages from bawdy house to prison, from the college to the perfumed salon of Ambroise de Loré, from muddy highways at night to the charnel houses of the Cemetery of the Innocents, where François, fascinated by the fresco of the dance of death, with its figures half-putrescent and devoured by worms, exclaimed: "Look! It is excellent to know what will happen to us all some day, so that we can disport ourselves and find diversion beforehand." Life to François, taken all in all, was a horrible business, and he plunged into pranks and dissipations as a means of escape. And always there was the sinister profile of the gibbet of Montfaucon to fill his mind with most lugubrious reflections. He knew that he was destined to die a man accursed, who had done wrong, and would do it again, forced by a fatality that would not let him go. There were times when he wept for his shames, and in his agony he cried out: "Lord, who am I? Tell me that. I do not know myself. I suffer and I am ashamed, and yet I must needs offend you."

Cursed by the discordant elements of his nature, he was doomed to a purgatory on earth. A lover of beauty and possessing the divine gift of a lyric ear, he could wallow in the filth of ugly lusts and get a high stimulation out of thieving and night-brawling. When offered the protection of Duke Charles at Blois, however, where he could have lived in luxury and have written his beloved poetry in peace, he scorned the syrupy atmosphere of artificial civilization, and stung by the gadfly of vagabondia, took to the road once more to join the society of robbers and cutthroats. Soon he was plunged into the depths of terrific suffering—his body was torn by the torture of the rack again and again. Yet out of his delirium of pain and fever and hunger he produced immortal verse like "Le Grand Testament," which is written with heart's blood, if sometimes disguised under the mask of mocking, mordant humor.

The last glimpse that Mr. Carco gives us of the *macabre* Master of Arts is when he leaves Paris on his second banishment, dark, sullen, shadow-thin—a muddy, blood-stained figure, capricious and abstracted, one who has been soundly beaten by the world, and is yet defiant as to the angle of his cap and the rebellious look in his starved eyes. This poor François de Montcorbier who felt longings for immortality in himself when he was yet in his teens, and who changed his name to "Villon" because *that* name would stick better in the mind of posterity, came to share the place of fame in the history of fifteenth-century France with Joan of Arc. But no one has ever paid for immortality more dearly. It would take a brave smile even from the ironic Villon to say with Conrad: "And indeed, what does the price matter, if the trick be well done?"

M. Carco has done a bold and illuminating piece of work, and Hamish Miles has furnished an admirable translation. "The Romance of Villon" will make one suffer, but it is a book not to be missed.

HUDSON STRODE

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Popular Biography

Andrew Jackson: An Epic in Homespun, by Gerald W. Johnson. New York: Minton, Balch and Company. 303 pages. $3.50.

MR. JOHNSON has chosen Andrew Jackson as the protagonist of his "epic," and the result may be summed up as a readable and entertaining book for those who prefer their history in the form of a dashing water color rather than a minute study in oil.

Approaching the subject as he evidently has done from a popular angle, the author had no difficult task before him. Andrew Jackson is probably the most lurid figure in American history, as well as the most dramatic. His life was one long series of startling episodes, from the time when he only half escaped having his youthful head split open by a British saber, until the day when he descended the steps of the Capitol, again a private citizen, amid the deafening shouts of a multitude of worshipers. The author has told this story with commendable impartiality. Following the safe middle way, he has neither attempted to idealize his hero, nor become afflicted with the mania for "debunking" which has seized so many modern historians. For Jackson's lifelong policy, which he describes as that of a charging bull, he has but one excuse to offer—it worked. On the other hand, he gives him credit, with convincing proof, for having possessed sincerity, honesty and patriotism, coupled with unbounded courage.

However, the book falls far short of the epic quality claimed for it in the title. In the first place, not enough space is devoted to the social and political life of the times, and to such formidable questions as the national bank and nullification. They are touched only in so far as they affected Jackson's personal life. Secondly, the author has given practically no quotations either from Jackson's own writings or from those of his contemporaries about him. He would be a more vivid figure, it would seem, were he allowed to speak for himself occasionally. And finally, the book has no fresh revelations to make regarding Jackson's life. It contains nothing of importance which is not told in the three-volume biography by James Parton, and leaves out a great deal, especially original documents and letters, included in it. The result is a readable, but not a significant book.

JENNINGS RICE.

Fiction Parade

Jalna, by Mazo de la Roche. Boston: Little, Brown and Company. $2.

"JALNA," the winner of the recent $10,000 contest held by the Atlantic Monthly, is a somewhat surprising prize-novel. For one thing, it is very amusing. This large and boisterous Whiteoak family is drawn as near to the life as you could wish for. The author shows off each in turn, from old Gran, aged ninety-nine, to young Wakefield, aged nine, and none of them is allowed to strut too long upon the stage, for the best scenes, as the stage-manager knows, are the collective ones. The mere numerical weight of characters has been both a blessing and a hindrance to the author. She has her hands so full, just managing them, that she can show us no more than glimpses of their "inner selves," and the effect is somewhat tantalizing. At the end, though we may feel that we know them well, as if we had lived with them, we do not feel that we know them well, as if we had loved them. For this relief, thanks very much.

Cognac Hill, by Charles Divine. New York: Payson and Clarke, Ltd. $2.50.

IT is unhappily probable that we shall never have an adequate picture of the late War. It was such an unwieldy affair that even the reports of eye-witnesses —not to speak of the reports of generals—are of only partial value, and the best we can do is to piece them together into a kind of patched and imperfect panorama. "Cognac Hill," as the story of one Sanitary Headquarters behind the lines, will help in sketching in some tonal values in a background that is usually left as vague as glory. It is at first pathetic, and then enlightening, to see how eager our particular heroes are, in the beginning, to get to the front, and then how swiftly they become resigned to their paper-work and cognac, amorous nurses and the old army game. As a novel, "Cognac Hill" is often clumsy, and its people wooden or decalcomaniac, but as an unromantic hint of the muddle and mess the War seems to have been, it has its points.

Uncle Anghel, by Panaït Istrati. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. $2.50.

THESE three connected tales of the Rumanian peasantry continue the "Tales of Adrian Zograffi" which were begun in "Kyra Kyralina." The last especially, which is a story of bandit life, is a narrative of simplicity and occasional power, sometimes enlivened and sometimes marred by a wild grotesqueness. We cannot ask too much of a translator. To expect him to reproduce the work he is translating is to ask too much. But it is surely not too much to demand that he shall not give us a rendering, whether literal or not, that will read like an interlinear crib. It is certainly possible to keep to the original without making the English version so wooden that the author is made to appear a literary beginner. In the case of "Uncle Anghel," enough of the native narrative has come through this baptism of tongues to incline us to give M. Istrati the benefit of the doubt. But the translation and the doubt remain. Translating is getting to be a booming business. A day will come when we may realize that it is not always the author who is being awkward.

History of Anthony Waring, by May Sinclair. New York: The Macmillan Company. $1.50.

THIS novelette will neither damage nor improve Miss Sinclair's position in the second flight of contemporary English novelists. In a third of the usual space, it covers quite as much ground as novels generally do, taking Tony Waring from the age of four to his death at sixty-three, and hitting all the high spots of his unexciting career. If Miss Sinclair has made an experiment in economy, it must be called only partly successful, for she has over-economized the background at the expense of the narrative, so that the result reads too much like a bulletin of bare events. But if more and better novelists take it into their heads to try such condensing methods, we shall remember Miss Sinclair in our prayers. Perhaps we may live to see the time when the conscientious commuter will be able to down his four novels a day.

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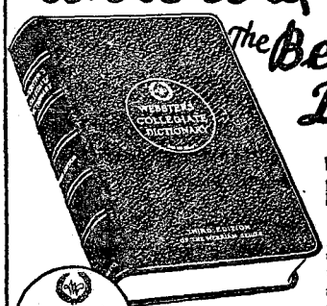

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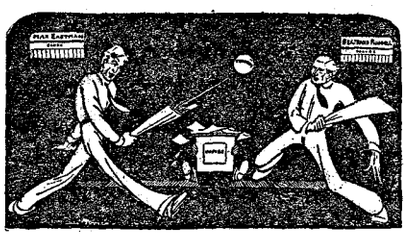

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An Unmarried Father, by Floyd Dell. New York: George H. Doran Company. $2.

THE hero of "An Unmarried Father," a young lawyer, engaged to be married, gets word that an almost forgotten affair of one moonlit night has saddled him with a son. The girl does not hold him accountable, and only asks his help in getting the child adopted, as she is bent on a career that has no room for motherhood or marriage. But he insists on taking the child himself. It makes an interesting situation. But Mr. Dell, either because he won't or because he can't, does not give us the gist of the matter, any more than he gives us the gist of his people. He finishes, without ending, the situation, and he makes all his people, without exception, merely likable and nothing else. It is not quite a Success Story, but that is the atmosphere. Floyd Dell, like Compton Mackenzie, whom in many respects he resembles, is proving a disappointment. Ten years ago, he was a cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, on the literary horizon. Today he is no longer on the horizon, but he is still about the same size.

A Victim of Circumstances, by George Gissing. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. $2.

IT is not strange that Gissing was not much read in his lifetime; the wonderful thing is that there should be even a mild vogue for him now. Perhaps it is his completely unromantic view of women that has commended him, however slightly, to a less chivalrous age than his. Even though you like him, it is not nearly so easy to explain your liking as it is, say, for such a man as Borrow. To speak truth, Gissing is a depressing fellow, and even in his most objective mood you are always conscious that at any moment the resigned groans may begin again. In the length of his novels he managed to get interested enough in his writing to hew out passages that make the Gissingite keep going; but in these short stories, now published for the first time in book form, he succeeds only in making everybody uncomfortable. The introduction, by Alfred Gissing, does not help matters much. Among other things that had been better left unsaid, he avers that Gissing "was by no means devoid of humor, as has often been supposed." Some desperate wag will be telling us next that Wordsworth was a drunkard.

T. S. MATTHEWS.

Contributors

HAROLD J. LASKI is a member of the faculty of the University of London, and the author of "Authority in the Modern State" and many other works.

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